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C. P. Knight

I HAD been spending the summer in a very much-suburban cottage on the road between London and Portsmouth. At the time I was temporarily out of dogs; my collie, who was of a foolishly confiding disposition, having allowed himself to be stolen, and my Irish setter having been shot by a neighbouring farmer on suspicion of sheep. As a consequence, I was the especial delight of tramps, who visited me daily to beg a little something to help them to reach their innumerable relatives at either Portsmouth or London. Most of the male tramps were ostensibly sailors, as befitted the road over which they were tramping. Now, for my sins, I had been a sailor in my early youth, and I took pleasure in exposing the falsity of these pretended seafaring tramps. It was only necessary to ask them some easy question of elementary seamanship, to discover that their whole knowledge of the sea had been gathered from the transpontine drama. During the entire summer only one of the dozens of tramps who begged me to assist "a poor sailor," knew anything whatever about a ship. Why a sailor, whose instincts might be supposed to lead him to wander over land as well as sea, should so seldom be a tramp, and why, on the other hand, so many bricklayers should, in spite of the quieting influence of bricks, take to the road, are mysteries which some one ought to try to solve.

One morning the maid came to me and said that there was a tramp at the kitchen door who wanted breakfast, and seemed a decent sort of man. It was unusually early in the day for a tramp to be actively engaged in business; and thinking that it might be my duty to encourage early rising in tramps as well as in myself, I went to the kitchen door to see the man. He was a middle-aged, grizzled, weather-beaten and honest-looking fellow, poorly dressed, but by no means in rags. When he saw me he said good morning, and asked if I would be so good as to give a sailor a bit of bread. Now, a man may look honest and weather beaten and still not be a sailor. The cabman, for instance, often has a weather-beaten look, and occasionally has the air of an honest man. So I tested my tramp by saying, "If you are a sailor you can tell me what would be your first order if you were going to tack a full-rigged ship?"

"Well," he replied, "I might tell the man at the wheel to keep a good full, and I might sing out 'All hands 'bout ship.' Is that what you mean, sir?"

It wasn't precisely what I meant, and the man might have learned his answers from a penny dreadful of the so-called sea-story class, so I asked him one more question. "You're right enough so far; but what would you do next?"

"Why, I'd sing out 'Raise tacks and sheets. Leggo your bowlines fore and aft, and——'"

"That'll do," I said. "Come in and have some breakfast, and tell me how a decent sailor-man like yourself comes to be tramping."

"Thank you kindly, sir," said the man, availing himself with alacrity of my invitation. "It's like this, sir. I was paid off at Portsmouth ten days ago. There was very little coming to me, and that little didn't last long Then I tried to get a ship and couldn't; so I started for London, being pretty sure of finding a ship there, leastways providing the whole bloomin' docks isn't full of Dutchmen, waiting to ship for nothing a month, and offering to advance a month of it themselves."

Not to dwell further on my first half-hour with a genuine sailor-tramp, I will merely say that, after he had made his meal, I gave him some tobacco, and sat out in my ten-by-twelve-foot garden with him for a friendly smoke.

"How long have you been a sailor?" I asked.

"Thirty years," he replied. "I've been four times round the world, and six times round Cape Horn. I've been whaling for three years in the Arctic seas. I've fought in four general engagements while I was in the Royal Navy, and in a dozen pretty stiff fights when I was in the Peruvian Navy. I've held a mate's certificate for the last ten years, but I haven't had a mate's berth more than a year in all that time. But you know how it is yourself, sir, and what following the sea amounts to nowadays. I've had thirty years of it, and now I'm a bloomin' tramp."

"But you've seen a good deal of the world."

"Yes, sir. I've seen a lot of different docks, and drunk a lot of different drinks, if that's what you mean. I never saw nothing, however, that was worth going out of England to see."

'Not even the sea-serpent, or the *Flying Dutchman?*" I asked, with a vague idea of saying something light and cheerful.

The man looked at me curiously. "No," he continued, after a moment. "I can't say as I ever saw a sea serpent—that was a regular able-bodied snake; but I won't say as I never saw the *Flying Dutchman*"

"Then you have seen him!" I exclaimed. "Tell me all about it."

"I'll do anything you like, sir," he replied, "after the handsome way you've treated me; but I know you won't believe me. It's a sight of years since I knocked off telling that story. Everybody as heard it said as I was a bloomin' liar. You may be good enough to take it alongside, but you'll never histe it in. But it's the living truth, sir, that I've seen the *Flying Dutchman* not once, but twice; and what's more, I'm the last man that ever saw him; and what's more, no man will ever see him again"

The man was so much in earnest that it was evident there was a story somewhere about him; and I pushed the tobacco-pouch over to him, and told him that if he could tell a story more improbable than those told by the average tramp, I should greatly like to hear it.

He began. "It was somewhere in 'eighty-four or 'eighty six that I was on a yachting cruise aboard a big six-hundred-ton yacht that you probably know of,—the *Wings of*

the Morning. I was second mate of her, and her owner was a Mr. Nelson. They did say that he was one of the richest men in England. I've done a good deal of yachting aboard steam-yachts in my time, and the most discontented people I ever come across were the yacht owners. You see, when a man gets bloomin' rich all his friends expect him to take to yachting, and he's got to do it Most of them hate it, but they can't help themselves. I was once on a yachting cruise with an old gentleman who was sea sick every blessed minute, except when we was lying in dock. More than that, he was afraid of his life, and every time we met any weather worth speaking of he made sure he was going to be drowned. But you should have seen him when friends came down aboard the yacht to see him. Then he'd tell them that there was nothing he loved so much as the sea, and that he felt as if he really couldn't live ashore no more. That's the way with most of the rich men that begins yachting at fifty or sixty. They are fairly drove to do it by public opinion, and I actually knew one of them to bribe his captain to cast the yacht away,—after he was out of her, you understand, and in a place where there wasn't no chanst of anybody's being drowned.

"Mr. Nelson wasn't exactly of this sort. He was really fond of yachting, though he didn't have much nerve, and was always a little afraid of his yacht. Snakes were what he hated most of all, and the sight of one would make him go on the sick list for days. Once, at Bombay, a snake-charmer came aboard; and when Mr. Nelson saw the snakes, he dropped on the deck as if he had been shot dead. But he treated his men well. All hands got about double the wages that were paid at the time on deep-water ships, and the grub was something amazin', Jack getting dinners of four courses, with a table, and a clean cloth, and a boy in uniform to wait on him. If that sort of thing could have lasted, sailoring would have been about the best trade a man can turn his hand to, instead of being the worst.

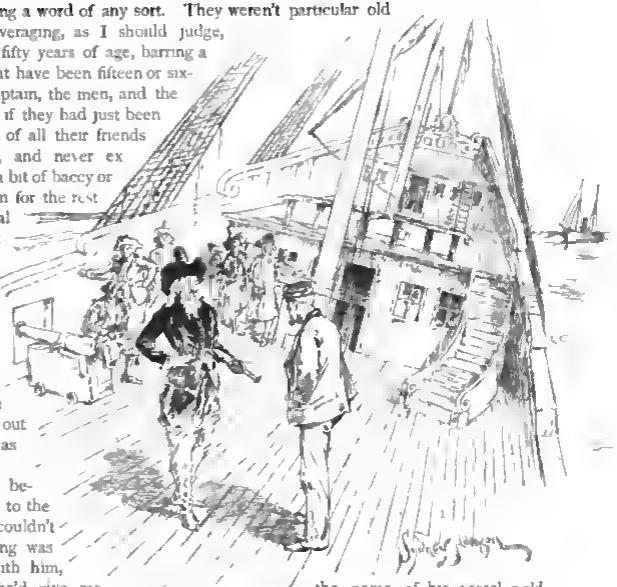
"We had been on a voyage to Bombay and Ceylon, through the Canal, and we were returning by way of the Cape We had stopped at Capetown for a few days, and got pretty sick of it; for, next to Sarah Lone, it is about the meanest place in Africa, and you can't say worse than that. About 33° 20' south latitude, we overhauled a vessel that was lying becalmed, there not being a breath of breeze at the time, though the glass was going down, and I was looking for more wind in the course of the next twenty-four hours than we should be wanting. Our course brought us within hailing distance of the stranger, and we saw that, though she was a full-rigged ship, with stump t'gallant masts, she was built like a regular old Dutch galliot, such as they used to build by the mile and saw off in lengths When I was young you'd see a galliot every now and then lying in London docks; but it's many a year since I've seen or heard of one.

"There was something the matter with the Dutchman—more than merely being a Dutchman—for she had hoisted her ensign at half mast. At least we judged that it was her ensign, for it hung like a rag, and you couldn't make out, even when she rolled, whether it was an ensign or the old man's spare shirt. She hadn't had a coat of paint for so long that you couldn't tell what her original colour had been, and there wasn't a cloth in any of her sails that wasn't patched till it looked like one of my old mother's bed-quilts. When she heeled over you could see the barnacles and grass clinging to her bottom. Her standing rigging was chafed and grey, as if it hadn't been tarred since it was first set up, and rattlins were missing in a dozen places. Irish pennants were flying all over her. You couldn't make out the name on her stern, and if she had any number or house-signal she didn't show it. Her yards were squared, and her sails were slatting against the masts, as the swell, coming from the suthard and steadily increasing, made her uneasy, being as she was, of course, without steerage way on her.

"Mr. Nelson ordered the engines to be stopped, and said he would send a boat aboard the Dutchman to see if there was anything the matter with her. I was sent in charge of the boat, with four men to pull her; and the nearer we came to the stranger the more I wondered at her. I could see about a dozen heads looking at us over the rail; while on the high poop there was an old man with a big glass under his arm, who looked just like one of those Dutchmen that you've seen, I don't doubt, at the theatre in *Rip Van Winkle*,—the chaps with tall pointed hats that are deaf and dumb, and drink blazin' good gin. One of the men says, 'I'm damned if she ain't the *Flying Dutchman*!' and, to tell the truth, I was beginning to think so myself, but I says to him, 'If that's the *Flying Dutchman* she's doubled the Cape, which is just what she can't never do. A lot of flying there is about her! She'd fly about a knot and a half an hour with a hurricane astern of her.' You see, sir, I didn't want the men to get a notion that they'd seen the genuine *Flying Dutchman*; for, if they did, they'd be discontented for the rest of the voyage.

"We pulled up under her main channels, and I watched my chance to climb aboard, for the Dutchmen hadn't manners enough to put a ladder over the side. I told the men to wait for me in the boat, and glad I was that I had done so the minute I reached the deck, for there was no mistake about her being a mighty scary craft to board. The old man with the glass, who I judged was the captain, came to meet me, and made a mighty polite speech in what I suppose was Dutch. At any rate, it was a language that I couldn't understand a word of. So I says that I was very much obliged to him for his politeness, and would he please to say what was the matter, and what he wanted.

"Well, he talked a lot more of his outlandish lingo; and then, having a bit of chalk in my pocket, I chalked up our position, at noon the day before, on the side of his deck-house, and says, 'Is that what you're wanting to know?' But he shook his head. Then I walked for'ard, and looks into the harness cask, which was pretty nearly full, showing that the Dutchman wasn't out of provisions. There were four water-casks lashed amidships, and the bung of one of them out, and the men were going to it and drinking from time to time, so there was no want of water. Then I took a look at the pump, which was more like a town-pump than a pump fit for a Christian sea-going vessel; and I laid my hand on it, and asked the captain if there was anything wrong thereabouts. He shook his head again; and, to make sure, I picked up the sounding-rod, which was there convenient, and sounded the well myself, finding no more water in her than there ought to have been. All this time the crew were standing at a respectful distance, watching me,



but never saying a word of any sort. They weren't particular old to look at, averaging, as I should judge, from thirty to fifty years of age, barring a boy, who might have been fifteen or sixteen. The captain, the men, and the boy looked as if they had just been to the funeral of all their friends and relations, and never expected to see a bit of baccy or a glass of rum for the rest of their nat'ral lives. I'm not easy scared, but there was something in the look of that hooker and her crew that made me anxious to get out of her as soon as possible.

"I was beginning to say to the captain that I couldn't see as anything was the matter with him, and that if he'd give me the name of his vessel we'd report her when we arrived in London. But he interrupted me; and, taking me by the arm, led me on to the fokesell, where he took up the end of a hawser that was coiled at the foot of the foremast; and, holding up the end as if it was a length of hose, he pointed it at the yacht, and then waved his arm towards the norrard. I saw then what he wanted. He wanted us to tow him; but he didn't say for how long, or what he was ready to pay. Being in a hurry to get back to the yacht, I says to him, 'If so be as you're wanting a tow, I'll report the same to Mr Nelson, and I don't mind telling you that he's just that soft-hearted that he'll probably do it, though in his place I'd not waste my coal on any Dutchman.' The captain bowed very polite, and I will say that he showed no signs of being offended at the freedom of my language, which was probably because he didn't understand it. So I shook hands with him,—and his hand was as thin as a skeleton's, and made my blood turn cold,—and then I gets aboard my boat, and tells the men to give way with a will. I saw they were uneasy, and so I said, 'She's running short of provisions, and the captain wants us to tow him out of this calm. That don't look much as if he was the *Flying Dutchman*. Old Vanderdecken don't like steam, for he's never been sighted by a single steamer since steam was invented.'

"This notion didn't seem to have its effect; for the men said nothing, and I could see plain enough that they had made up their minds that the stranger was the *Flying Dutchman* and nobody else.

"Well, to make a long story short, Mr. Nelson said, as soon as I had made

my report, that he would give the Dutchman a tow; so we dropped down close to her, and got her hawser aboard, and started on our course again. It was like towing a meeting-house against a gale of wind. What with her square bows and her foul bottom, it was about all we could do to drag her. We towed her from about noon till sunset, when, a breeze having sprung up from the south, and the glass still dropping, our captain prevailed on Mr. Nelson to cast the Dutchman adrift, and the last we saw of her she was standing to the norrard with a fair wind, and everything set that would draw."

"And you believe that she was the *Flying Dutchman*?" I asked.

"I'm sure of it, sir!" he replied; "though how she got around the Cape at last is more than I or you can tell. But just consider what sort of a craft that Dutchman was, and what sort of men there were aboard of her, and then remember that the very night we cast her adrift it came on to blow a living gale of wind, so that before morning we had to heave the yacht to, and while we were doing of it she shipped a sea that swept her decks clean of everything, and carried overboard two of the men who were in the boat with me when I boarded her, and you'll see that she couldn't have been anything else except Vanderdecken's craft."

"It does look that way," I said. "But you told me you had seen her twice. Tell me about the second time."

"So I will, sir," replied the tramp. "The gale I was telling you about held for about thirty-six hours, and then we had pleasant weather with strong southerly breezes. We came along up the coast, touching at Sarah Lone and Madeira, and reaching home without anything happening worth speaking of. The yacht was laid up, and we were all paid off, and for the next four years I was in the cattle trade between London and New York. But one day I met Mr. Nelson on Tower Hill, and he invited me into a public-house to talk over old times, he never having a bit of stuck-up pride about him, though he was worth his millions.

"Well, we talked of one thing and another, until it came out that he was going on another yachting cruise, and did I want to go along as second mate? Nat'rally I did, for yachting is a sight better than cattle; and I agreed to go, without asking where or for how much. Mr. Nelson noticed this, and said,—'You don't ask where we're bound to this time?'

"'And I don't much care,' said I, 'providing of course it ain't Vera Cruz, or some other beastly place where there ain't no holding ground for the yacht, and you can't get anything but yellow fever ashore.'

"'Did you ever hear of the Sargasso Sea?' says Mr. Nelson.

"'Certainly, sir,' says I.

"'Well, there's where we're going' says he, 'only I expect you to keep it a dead secret. And I'll tell you why we're going there. You see this Sargasso Sea is a sort of eddy in the Atlantic, and everything that is adrift and don't sink gets into this eddy sooner or later, and stays there. No vessel ever enters the Sargasso Sea of her own accord. If she is a sailing vessel she keeps away so as not to get becalmed, and if she is a steamer she similarly keeps away because she is afraid of fouling her propeller among the weed and drift that covers the Sargasso Sea. No man, so far as I can find out, has ever been to the centre of that sea, and come back again.'

"'What should any one want to go there for, sir?' I says.

"'Because it is there that we would find every derelict that has been adrift on the Atlantic for the last thousand years, barring, of course, all such as have gone to the bottom. There's Spanish plate ships there; and there's Atlantic liners there. The middle of that there sea will be as crowded as London docks, and there's millions of

pounds of treasure, not to speak of salvage, waiting for the man that takes a steamer there and back again.'

"'The Sargasso Sea suits me well enough,' said I. 'I can't say as I expect to find a fortune waiting for me there, but I'll go there or anywhere else with you, sir, and the sooner the better, for I'm dead sick of carting cattle across the Western Ocean in those old waggons that I've been in for the last four years.'

"Well, to get along with my story. About the middle of July two years ago come this summer, I sailed from London as second mate of the *Wings of the Morning*. Nobody except the officers knew where we were bound, and they didn't say much about it among themselves, for, to tell the truth, we didn't believe that there would be anything in the middle of the Sargasso Sea, except more gulf weed than our propeller would like to be mixed up with. When we reached the northerly edge of the Sea we slowed down and stood directly to the southward, taking every pains not to foul the propeller, for the weed was middling thick. At night we shut off steam and let her lie quiet till daylight, for there was hardly a catspaw of wind stirring, and next to no swell. In this way we worked her along for a week, and it was the hottest week I ever saw. I used to think that the Persian Gulf was the hottest place this side of the next world, but the Sargasso Sea is hotter, and it has a smell of rotting seaweed that is enough to turn the stomach of an ostrich, or of a sailor in the fokesell of one of Smith and Jones's Australian liners.

"The driftwood was getting more and more plentiful as we went along, and we had passed two derelicts, one of which was bottom upwards, and the other was waterlogged, and about daybreak on the seventh day we sighted what looked like a regular fleet of ships. We was then just in the heart of the Sargasso Sea, and, as Mr. Nelson had said, all the derelicts for a thousand years had got together there. They lay as close, and closer, than ships in a crowded dock. They had fouled one another in all sorts of ways. The jib-boom of one would be poked through the main rigging of another, and you'd see three or four ships lying side by side as if they were lashed together. I counted thirty-two vessels, big and small, in that there fleet, and this didn't include all of them by any manner of means. Mostly they were dismasted, but there were several of them that had their spars all in place, and their sails hanging ragged and rotten from the yards. There were steamers there too, and I saw one big iron liner that had been given up as missing years before. You'd know her name if I told it, but I ain't agoing to, for the sake of those as had friends aboard of her. Her bows were stove in as if she had been in collision with the ice, but otherwise she looked all right, and the paint on her funnel showed plain enough for me to know what line she had belonged to, even if I hadn't known the ship herself, which I did, having once been bos'en aboard of her.

"As I was saying, these ships lay all together, grinding slowly against one another, though not enough to do any real damage, there being no swell to speak of, owing partly to the weed and wreckage of all sorts that was tangled together, and covered the water as far as you could see. I never could understand how we escaped losing all the blades of our propeller, not to speak of breaking the shaft, but somehow nothing of the kind happened to us. There was a sort of steam rising from the weed as the sun warmed it, and there were more turtles, and swordfish, and big sunfish, and such showing on the surface where the weed had parted a bit, and left patches of clear water, than I ever saw at once in any part of the world.

"When Mr. Nelson came on deck and saw the fleet of derelicts he was delighted, and could hardly wait till after breakfast, so anxious he was to board some of them. He ordered the biggest of our quarter boats to be launched, and as soon as the mate

came on deck, at eight bells, he left him in charge of the yacht, and he and the captain and I and six men started to pull for the nearest of the wrecks.

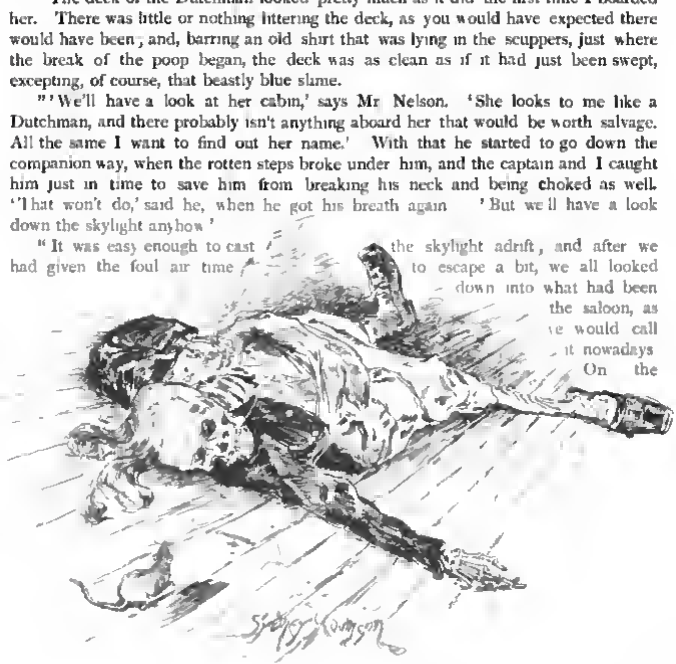
"It was hard work forcing the boat through the weed, but after a while we came pretty near to a ship that somehow looked familiar to me. All of a sudden it came to me that it was the identical Dutchman that we had towed four years before, and that I had always believed to be the *Flying Dutchman* herself. I saw Mr. Nelson was meaning to board her, so I said nothing. There was no mistaking her when we were close to her, only she was more rotten and forlorn-looking than ever. Her masts were all gone, and her bulwarks were smashed, and she had a list over toward the wreck that was lying close against her on her starboard side.

"We made the boat fast in her mizzen-chains, and all hands except one climbed aboard. The deck was lying at an angle, as if she had heeled over before a smart breeze, and it was covered for the most part with a nasty bluish slime, that was as slippery as slush, and wasn't exactly like anything that I had ever seen before. Her bulwarks being gone on the starboard as well as the port side, you could step from her to the next wreck, that was waterlogged and lying so low that her deck was almost awash. I noticed the same slime on the deck of this other wreck too, and I wondered if we should find it on every other wreck that we might board.

"The deck of the Dutchman looked pretty much as it did the first time I boarded her. There was little or nothing littering the deck, as you would have expected there would have been; and, barring an old shirt that was lying in the scuppers, just where the break of the poop began, the deck was as clean as if it had just been swept, excepting, of course, that beastly blue slime.

"'We'll have a look at her cabin,' says Mr. Nelson. 'She looks to me like a Dutchman, and there probably isn't anything aboard her that would be worth salvage. All the same I want to find out her name.' With that he started to go down the companion way, when the rotten steps broke under him, and the captain and I caught him just in time to save him from breaking his neck and being choked as well. ''That won't do,' said he, when he got his breath again. 'But we'll have a look down the skylight anyhow.'

"It was easy enough to cast the skylight adrift, and after we had given the foul air time to escape a bit, we all looked down into what had been the saloon, as we would call it nowadays. On the



deck, close to a big table, lay a bundle of clothes; and a little further lay the identical pointed hat that I had seen the captain of the Dutchman wear. We didn't need to ask what that bundle of clothes meant, for the shape of it would have told the story, even if bits of bones picked white by the rats hadn't showed in places. We were just turning away, Mr. Nelson looking pretty white, when one of the men sings out, 'For the Lord's sake, what's that?'

"I looked at the man, and saw that he was badly scared. He was looking across to the waterlogged wreck that lay on our starboard side. Climbing slowly and clumsily aboard this wreck was the strangest animal that any sober man ever dreamed of. Its neck was at least forty feet long, and was exactly like a tremendous snake. It had a crocodile's head, with jaws that could have taken in a whole ox, and teeth

that would have bit clean through a ship's mainmast. As it dragged its body out of the water I saw that it had flippers instead of legs, and that it was something half-way between a whale and a lizard in shape. Its colour was a light lead colour, such as the Yankee men-of-war used to be painted when they were blockading the Southern ports, and the same nasty bluish slime that was on the deck of the Dutchman was dripping from the beast's neck as it swung it around, looking for what it might see

"It took about thirty seconds for us to take in what I have just told you, and then the beast saw us, and opening its jaws, started to come aboard the Dutchman. We didn't wait for him. The men were in the boat before any one had time to give an order, and Mr Nelson had dropped in a dead faint. The captain and I lowered him into the boat, and I snatched up the old shirt that I told you was lying in the scuppers, for I didn't want to leave the wreck altogether empty-handed; and I followed the captain into the boat, and we shoved clear of the wreck just as that horrible snake's

head showed itself where the rail ought to have been. It watched us for a few minutes, and I never was gladder than I was when the beast seemed to give up the idea of following us, and we saw the head disappear again. The men worked as if they were mad to get back to the yacht, and though Mr. Nelson came to in a few minutes, he kept his eyes shut, and kept moaning, 'For God's sake get out of this at once.' No sooner were we aboard the yacht than the engine was started, and we made our way as fast as we dared to towards the open sea, and reached it without any disaster. Mr. Nelson had lost every bit of his nerve, and all he cared for was to get out of the Sargasso Sea and back into blue water as fast as the yacht could carry him.

"I told you I picked up an old shirt just as I left the wreck. I found as soon as I touched it that there was something middling heavy wrapped up in it, and I unrolled it when I got aboard the yacht. It was that very same glass that the Dutch captain had under his arm when I first saw him walking his quarter-deck. It was small and old-fashioned, and the copper was black with verdigris, but I could easy enough make out the name that was engraved on it."

"What was the name?" I asked, as the mate paused.

"On that there glass," said the mate solemnly, "engraved in Dutch letters which were near enough like English letters for me to read them, was the name 'Vanderdecken,' and the date '1648.' What do you make of that, sir?"

"That either you saw the *Flying Dutchman*,—or you didn't," I replied.

"Just so, sir. What you mean is that either I have told you the truth or I have been lying. Well, I don't blame you, sir! I don't expect anybody to believe that yarn, and that's why I very seldom tell it. But for all that it's the gospel truth."

Was the man a liar, a lunatic, or simply one who had seen a little more of the wonders of the sea than falls to the lot of other men? I confess I am not prepared to answer. Are you?

W. L. Alden.

A Tale of Two Oceans

"Woman of outer darkness, fiend of death,
From what inhuman cave, what dire abyss,
Hast thou invisible that spell o'erheard?
What potent hand hath touched thy quickened corse,
What song dissolved thy cerements, who unclosed
Those faded eyes and filled them from the stars?"

LANDOR: *Gebir*.

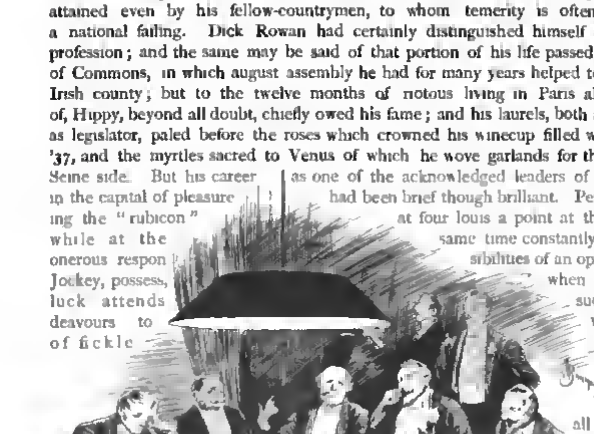
CHAPTER I

TOWARDS the end of September, about eight years ago, the steamship *Albrecht*, under the command of the popular Captain Pellegrini, had on its voyage down the Danube, as far as Rustchuck, the honour of counting among its passengers a gentleman to whom not inaptly might have been addressed the somewhat audacious remark made by Charles Buller to a well-known peer, now deceased, "I often think how puzzled your Maker must be to account for your conduct." And, indeed, a more curious jumble of lovable and detestable qualities than went to the making-up of the personality, labelled for formal purposes Lieutenant Colonel Richard Ulick Verner Rowan, but familiarly known to Society as "Hippy" Rowan, it would, we think, have been difficult to find. Selfish almost to cruelty, and yet capable of acts of generous self-sacrifice to which many a better man could not perhaps have risen; famous for his unnecessary harshness in the numerous wars wherein he had distinguished himself, and yet enjoying the well-merited reputation of being the best-natured man in London, Hippy Rowan, thanks to the calm and healthy spirit of philosophy within him, had in the course of his fifty odd years of mundane experiences, never allowed a touch of cynicism to chill his heart. It is not so easy or natural as many may imagine to be content with a great deal; but in the golden days when much had been his—at the meridian of his altogether pleasant life, in which even the afternoon shadows were in no wise indicative of the terrors of advancing night—Dick Rowan was possessed of the same serene spirit of

content which distinguished him in the later and more troublous times when he found himself forced to look gout and debt in the face on an income barely double the wages he had formerly given to his *cordon bleu*.

Although, when we present him for the first time to our readers, Colonel Rowan is past fifty, he has been for the last twenty odd years what he himself termed "hopelessly and irretrievably ruined," which meant that he could count on but little over a thousand pounds per annum for his maintenance. In former days he had been far better off and, indeed, for a very short time—a period of about twelve months—was the possessor of a very large sum of money, wealth suddenly inherited, which he had squandered in the most extravagant fashion.

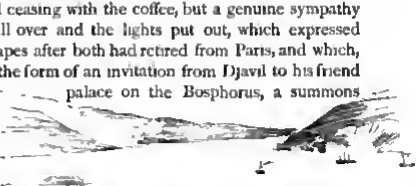
Disraeli used to say, "When I meet a man whose name I cannot remember, I give myself two minutes: then, if it be a hopeless task, I always say, 'And how is the old complaint?'" Now, if the great Tory leader could be imagined by any miracle forgetting the name of his highly-esteemed friend Hippy Rowan, and meeting him and asking him the above searching and comprehensive question, the reply doubtless would have been, "I only got back last week," or "I'm going next month," or something after that fashion; for certainly Colonel Rowan would have interpreted "the old complaint" to signify his passionate love for Paris, the theatre of his splendid follies, the sepulchre of his fortune indeed, but the Mecca whither his faithful feet were ever eager to speed—the shrine at which his knees, even when gouty, were glad to kneel. The sole surviving representative of one of the most patrician families of Ireland, a man of remarkable personal beauty—his good looks, by the way, in his youth would have been best described by the slang adjective "showy,"—for, ever a man of gigantic stature and herculean build, his bright auburn hair and beard had given him during the earlier part of his career a loud and flaming aspect which rendered him a hopelessly compromising Clavaroche for any Jacqueline to keep clandestine appointments with—as he was reckless and daring to a degree but rarely attained even by his fellow-countrymen, to whom temerity is often ascribed as a national failing. Dick Rowan had certainly distinguished himself in his martial profession; and the same may be said of that portion of his life passed in the House of Commons, in which august assembly he had for many years helped to represent an Irish county; but to the twelve months of riotous living in Paris already spoken of, Hippy, beyond all doubt, chiefly owed his fame; and his laurels, both as warrior and as legislator, paled before the roses which crowned his winecup filled with Yquem of '37, and the myrtles sacred to Venus of which he wove garlands for that goddess by Seine side. But his career as one of the acknowledged leaders of *la haute noce* in the capital of pleasure had been brief though brilliant. Persistently playing the "rubicon" at four louis a point at the Petit Club, while at the same time constantly assuming the onerous respon sibilities of an open bank at the Jockey, possess, when unfailing bad luck attends such gallant endeavours to win the smiles of fickle fortune, at least, the advantage not common to all evils of providing in themselves their own



antidote and cure; and so, at the end of twelve brief months devoted to such pastimes, and others no less costly though less avowable, the gallant colonel had been forced to acknowledge his defeat, and retire with his never-failing grace from the French capital, exchanging indeed with regret *Dugléré* for the Speaker, and leaving with a sigh the sparkle of the Grand Seize for the comparative respectability of St. Stephen's.

All this had taken place twenty years and more before the opening of our story, and in the course of this score of years Hippy, by reason of certain prolonged and dangerous rambles undertaken by him for purposes of sport and amusement in all kinds of outlandish countries, had acquired among his friends a not inconsiderable reputation as a traveller, for though, while his money lasted, he had been quite content to limit his wanderings to explorations in the *pays du tendre*, yet, when forced by unmerciful disaster to fold his pleasure tent and steal away, he had sought to solace his soul for the loss of fortune by "going to and fro in the earth," after the fashion of the prince in whose service indeed that very fortune had been spent—one year suffering himself to be entertained by the Emir of Bokhara, and in the course of the next twelve months accepting the hospitality of the Imaum of Muscat; becoming acquainted in his rambles, gun and notebook in hand, with all sorts and conditions of men, from sovereign despots, nay, demi-gods, to slaves ranking far below quadrupeds. Nor did he limit his pastimes to sport pure and simple —for this curious being would leave Pall Mall one day to see if Schliemann had forgotten anything in the Trojan plain, or endeavour to catch Beke tripping in Sinai the next; in all these expeditions being, of course, greatly aided by his rare and precious gift of easily and accurately acquiring all languages and dialects, the choice Arabic with which it amused him to surprise the Shereef of Wazan being no less fluent than the Polish in which he flirted with pretty patriots in the land of Kosciuszco.

But the expedition on which he was bent when we introduce him to our readers was one calling for the lead of neither pencil nor pellet, but a journey of purely social purport. The all too brief days of Hippy's magnificence in Paris had been, so far as they went, concurrent with the reign of splendid folly which has made the name of Djavil Pacha famous in the annals of apolaustícism, and some of the most happy hours of Rowan's Parisian existence having been passed in the celebrated apartment on the corner of the Rue Taitbout and the Boulevard des Italiens, inhabited by the Turkish millionaire, between his Excellency and the gallant Colonel a warm feeling of friendship had sprung up—not the mere passing liking, born with the *bisque* and ceasing with the coffee, but a genuine sympathy which lasted when the banquet was all over and the lights put out, which expressed itself in various graceful and cordial shapes after both had retired from Paris, and which, just before our story opens, had taken the form of an invitation from Djavil to his friend to spend a few days with him at his — — — palace on the Bosphorus, a summons which Dick Rowan was now steaming down the Danube to obey.



He had chosen this particularly monotonous and uncomfortable way of reaching his friend for reasons which do not concern us; but the thought of the unpleasant railway journey from Rustchuck to Varna which awaited him, and then the encounter with the Black Sea, did not tend to assuage the twinges of gout and irritability which assailed him by fits and starts as, during the two dreary days he watched

the shores on either side glide slowly by—seeing on the right Hungary at length give place to Servia, and then Servia to Turkey, while perpetual Wallachia, sad and desolate, stretched unceasingly and for ever to the left—walking up and down the deck leaning on the arm of his trusty valet, or rather, Ancient or Lieutenant, Adams by name, a man almost as well known and fully as well informed as his master, a Cockney who, without any control over the aspirates in his native English, spoke eight other different languages, including Arabic, accurately and fluently, and whose knowledge of Oriental countries dated indeed from the days when he had been page-boy to the great Elchi in Constantinople. There were but few passengers on board—an abnormally small number, in fact—and to this circumstance, doubtless, was it due that Rowan who, as a rule, paid but little attention to his fellow-travellers, happened to remark a mysterious-looking individual—a man, and apparently not an old one—who sat quite apart from the others and by himself, muffled up to the eyes in a very voluminous, albeit rather dirty, white silk handkerchief, and who was evidently an invalid, judging from the listless way in which he sat, the extreme pallor of the only part of his face which could be seen, and above all, the fever-fed light which glared from between sore and lashless eyelids. He was dressed entirely in black, and although his clothes were somewhat shabby, they betokened carelessness on the part of their wearer rather than poverty; and Adams had noticed and called his master's attention to the fact that on one finger of the man's thin, yellow, dirty hand, which every now and then he would lift to rearrange still higher up about his face the silken mufflr, sparkled a diamond, which the omniscient valet recognised to be a stone of value.

"What an extremely disagreeable-looking man, Adams!" pettishly murmured the Colonel in English, as he and his servant in their perambulations up and down the deck for the twentieth time on the first morning of the journey passed by where the mysterious stranger sat. "And how he stares at us! He has the eyes of a lunatic, and there is evidently something horrible the matter with his face. Perhaps he's a leper. Ask the Captain about him."

But the ever-amiable Captain Pellegrini had not much information to impart, save indeed that the man was certainly neither a madman nor a leper, nor indeed, so far as he knew, an invalid. He was a Moldavian, Isaac Lebedenko by name, a young man, a medical student or doctor, the Captain thought, but, at all events, a man in very well-to-do circumstances, for he always spent his money freely.

"I have known him off and on for two years, please your Excellency," said the skipper "Though I must confess I have never seen his face properly, for he's always muffled up in that way. He takes his meals by himself, and of course pays extra for doing so, and in fact he always, so far as I know, keeps entirely to himself and never speaks to any one. But the steward's boy, who has waited on him and seen his face, says there is nothing the matter with him except indeed that he's the ugliest man he ever saw."

"Perhaps he's consumptive," suggested the Colonel But the all wise Adams shook his head. That was quite inadmissible. He had seen the man walk, and had noticed his legs. Phthisis could not deceive him, he could recognise its presence at a glance. This man was as strong on his legs as a panther; no consumption there.

"Well," said the Colonel, impatiently, "there's evidently something wrong with him, no matter what, and I'm glad I'm not condemned to remain long in his society; for he certainly has the most unpleasant look in his eyes that I've seen since we left the lepers." And then he turned the current of the conversation, and the subject dropped

That night very late, when the Colonel was sitting quite alone on deck, smoking a cigarette, and thinking over his approaching visit to Djavl, wondering what persons his old friend would have invited to his palace to meet him, and a thousand souvenirs

of the long-past pleasant Paris days thronging to his mind as he dreamily glanced up at the moon which smiled over slowly-receding Servia, a voice close by his ear, a slow, huskily sibilant high-pitched whisper, broke the stillness, saying in lisping French,—

"May I ask, Monsieur, by what right you dare to question persons about me?" and, turning, he saw standing by his shoulder the horrible man in shabby black, his eyes glaring with exceptional ferocity from between the red bare lids, and the diamond-decorated, claw-like hand grasping convulsively the soiled white muffler, presumably to prevent the vehemence of his speech from causing it to slip down.

Hippy rose to his feet at once, and, as he did so, his face passed close to the half-shrouded countenance of the man who had addressed him, and the familiar sickening smell of animal musk full of repulsive significance to the experienced traveller assailed his nostrils.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed, shrinking back, his disgust quite overpowering for the moment every other sentiment. "Stand back! Don't come near me!"

The man said nothing, stood quite still, but Rowan saw plainly in the moonlight the red-encircled eyes gleam with renewed ferocity, the yellow, claw-like hand wearing the diamond ring and grasping the dirty muffler agitated by a convulsive spasm, and heard beneath the silken covering the husky breathing caught as in a sob. Hippy recovered himself at once. "Forgive me, Monsieur," he said, coldly. "You startled me. Might I beg you to repeat your question?"

The man said nothing. It was evident that he had perceived the disgust he had inspired, and that his anger, his indignation, mastered him, and that he dared not trust himself to speak.

"You asked me, I think," continued the Colonel in a more gentle tone—for his conscience smote him as he reflected that he might perhaps involuntarily have caused pain to one who, notwithstanding his unpleasant aspect, and arrogant, not to say hostile, attitude, was doubtless merely an invalid and a sufferer—"You asked me, I think, Monsieur, by what right I made inquiries concerning you? Pray pardon me for having done so. I have, indeed, no excuse to offer, but I am really sorry if I have offended you. I merely asked the Captain——"

But the man interrupted him, his voice, which was tremulous with passion, coming as a husky, wheezy hiss, which rendered the strong lisp with which he pronounced the French the more noticeable and grotesque.

"You asked him—you dared ask him if I were not a leper. He told Hoffmann, the steward's boy, who told me. You can't deny it! Dog of an Englishman!"

Here, gasping for want of breath, and apparently quite overpowered by his anger, the man took a step towards Rowan. This outburst of vituperation came as a great relief to the Colonel. Like most persons of refined feeling, he could stand any wounds better than those inflicted by self-reproach, and the suspicion that perhaps by careless rudeness he had caused pain to one worthy only of pity had been as gall to him. The man's violent hostility and bad language entirely altered and brightened the aspect of affairs.

"I am sorry," said Hippy, with ironical politeness, "that my nationality should not meet with the honour of your approval. It is not, hélas! the proud privilege of all to be able to boast that they are natives of Moldavia, you know! *Pour le reste*, all I can do is to repeat my apology for——" But the man interrupted him again.

"Apology!" he echoed, if indeed any word indicative of resonance can be applied to the hoarse, damp, lisping whisper in which he spoke—"Apology! Ah, yes! You English curs are all cowards, and only think of apologies. You dare not fight, canaille, but you shall! I'll force you to!" And again he took a step forward, but this time in so menacing a fashion that the Colonel, half amused and half disgusted, thought it prudent to step back.

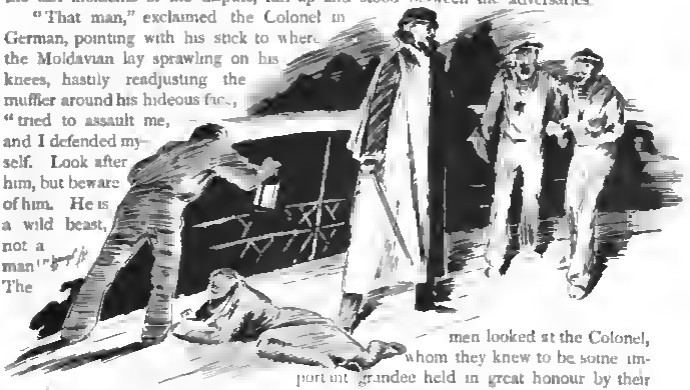
"Take care!" he said, half raising his stick as if to push the man back as an unclean thing; "keep your distance,"—and then, speaking quickly, for he feared an assault from the infuriated Moldavian, and was desirous of avoiding such an absurd complication, he continued, "If you can prove to me that I ought to meet you, I shall be happy to do so. You're right, of course, in thinking duels are no longer the fashion in England. But I'm an exception to the rule. I've fought two already, and shall be happy to add to the number by meeting you if it can be arranged. But that's hardly a matter you and I can properly discuss between ourselves, is it? Captain Pellegrini knows me. I'll leave my address with him. I have friends in Turkey, and shall be staying in the neighbourhood of Constantinople for a fortnight, so if you care to send me your seconds, I will appoint gentlemen to receive them. Allow me to wish you good night!" and Rowan raised his hat with much formal politeness, and stepped aside as if to depart, but the man sprang forward like a cat and stood in his way.

"Coward!" he exclaimed, extending both arms as if to bar Rowan's passage—"Cur! like all your countrymen! You think to run away from me, but you shall not! You shall go on your knees and beg my pardon, you accursed Englishman—you dog—you——"

But just as the enraged Moldavian reached this point in his fury an awful thing happened. The yellow, claw-like hand having been withdrawn from clutching at the dirty muffler, the vehemence of the man's speech began gradually to disarrange this covering, causing it little by little to sink lower and lower and thus to disclose by degrees to Rowan a sight so strange, so awful, that, impelled by a morbid curiosity, he involuntarily bent his head forward as his horror-stricken eyes eagerly noted every step in the infernal progress of this revelation. And thus, gazing at the slowly slipping silk, he saw first, beardless, hollow cheeks, twitching with emotion, but of a most hideous pallor, of indeed that awful hue inseparably associated with the idea of post mortem changes, then, in the middle of this livid leanness, lighted only by those fever-fed, red-lidded eyes, the beginning—the broad base springing from the very cheekbones as it were—of a repulsive prominence which apparently went narrowing on to some termination which as yet the scarf hid, but which the horrified Colonel felt every second surer and yet more sure could not resemble the nasal organ of a man, but rather the—— ah, yes! the silk fell, and in the moonlight Rowan saw the end he had foreseen, the pointed nose as of a large ferret, and beneath it, far in under it, nervously working, the humid, viscous horror of a small mouth almost round, but lipless, from which came in hurried, husky sibilance the lisping words of hate and menace.

This awful revelation, although partly expected, was so inexpressibly horrible when it came, that, doubtless, the expression of disgust in Rowan's face deepened so suddenly in acuteness and intensity as to arrest the attention of the monster who inspired it, infuriated though he was; for he paused in the lisping tumult of his violence, and, as he paused, became suddenly aware that the muffler had slipped down. Then, rightly interpreting the horror he saw written in the Colonel's countenance, and goaded to a fresh fit of fury, too despairing and violent even for words, he, with an inarticulate moan or whimper, rushed blindly forward with extended arms to attack his enemy. But the Colonel, who had foreseen this onslaught, stepped quickly

to one side, and, as he did so, quite overpowered by disgust, he could not resist the temptation of giving the hostile monster a violent push with his heavy walking-stick—a thrust of far greater force than he had intended, for it caused the man to totter and fall forward, just as two or three sailors, who, from a distance, had witnessed the last incidents of the dispute, ran up and stood between the adversaries.



"That man," exclaimed the Colonel in German, pointing with his stick to where the Moldavian lay sprawling on his knees, hastily readjusting the muffler around his hideous face, "tried to assault me, and I defended myself. Look after him, but beware of him. He is a wild beast, not a man! The men looked at the Colonel, whom they knew to be some important grandee held in great honour by their Captain, and then at the shabby mass of black clothes sprawling on the deck, and then at each other, and marvelled greatly, open-mouthed, not knowing what to say or think or do

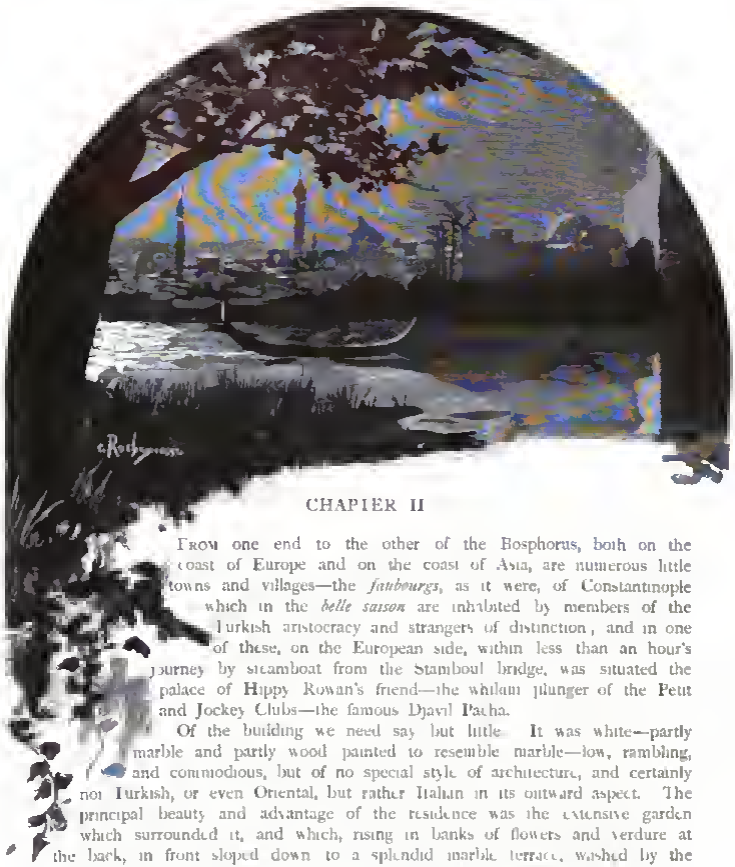
"I shall see the Captain about this to-morrow morning," continued Rowan. "But in the meantime, as I say, look after this—this—man, but beware of him!" and so speaking, he turned and strode away in the direction of his cabin.

Just before reaching the stairway he turned and looked back. There in the moonlight stood the man in black, gazing after him, the awful face hidden once more in the dirty muffler, which was now stained on one side with the blood which came trickling down from a wound on the brow. As he saw the Colonel turn, the man raised his clenched fist and shook it very slowly, solemnly, and deliberately—the gesture of a warning and of a curse—and the sailors, fearing further violence, closed around him. Then the Colonel turned and went his way to bed. The following morning Rowan of course made his faithful Adams (who, by the way, was never astonished at anything, having acquired through long residence in the East the stolidity of the Oriental) fully acquainted with the strange events of the preceding night, but charged him to say nothing to anybody.

"I have thought the matter over," said the Colonel, "and have decided merely to tell the Captain that I had a few words with this man, and in a heated moment struck him, and then give Pellegrini his Excellency's address where we shall be for the next fortnight, so that if this man wants to communicate with me in any way, he can. Of course any question of a duel with such a brute is absurd, but I hope he won't attempt to assault me again to-day."

"I'll keep a sharp look-out he doesn't, sir," said Adams.

But such precautions were unnecessary. Nothing more was seen of the Moldavian, who presumably was confined to his cabin by his wound, and the following morning at early dawn the Colonel and his servant left the steamer at Rustchuck and took the train to Varna and the Black Sea, *en route* for the splendours of the Bosphorus



CHAPTER II

From one end to the other of the Bosphorus, both on the coast of Europe and on the coast of Asia, are numerous little towns and villages—the *faubourgs*, as it were, of Constantinople which in the *belle saison* are inhabited by members of the Turkish aristocracy and strangers of distinction, and in one of these, on the European side, within less than an hour's journey by steamboat from the Stamboul bridge, was situated the palace of Hippy Rowan's friend—the whilom plunger of the Petit and Jockey Clubs—the famous Djavil Pacha.

Of the building we need say but little. It was white—partly marble and partly wood painted to resemble marble—low, rambling, and commodious, but of no special style of architecture, and certainly not Turkish, or even Oriental, but rather Italian in its outward aspect. The principal beauty and advantage of the residence was the extensive garden which surrounded it, and which, rising in banks of flowers and verdure at the back, in front sloped down to a splendid marble terrace, washed by the waters of the Bosphorus, that led to the Pacha's private landing-place and quay, whereby was moored the private steam launch of his Excellency.

Djavil was a bachelor, kept no harem, and lived in European style, his head cook and the chief assistants of that artist having been imported direct from Bignon's, while the palace was throughout furnished by a *tapissier* from Paris; the only concession to Turkish prejudices which a careful observer might have remarked being the absence of statuary and paintings—the Koran, as we know, forbidding the reproduction in painting of animate objects, and Djavil having, before

leaving the French capital, disposed of his splendid canvases and marbles in the Rue Drouot—whether induced to make this sacrifice by religious motives or for more sordid reasons, who shall say?

In Constantinople—which, by the way, is the most backbiting, tittle-tattling, scandalmongering little village in the world—the ex-Ambassador and old Parisian *viveur* was greatly blamed for living in so thoroughly European a fashion, keeping open house, constantly entertaining the most distinguished members, male and female, of the European colony. The clever and ambitious Djavil, however, cared nothing for such disapproval, so long as he retained the favour of the Sultan and the Grand Vizier (the gambler and *roué* of the Rue Royale and Rue Scribe having now developed into a hard-working Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs). He quite determined to live his private life as he pleased since he devoted his public life to the service of his country, and when the day's work was over and he embarked on his steam-launch on his return journey to his palace, he left behind him the Turkish statesman and became again purely and simply the cosmopolitan man of pleasure.

Of other permanent guests beside himself at the palace, Hippy found but three—his old friend, a well-known gambler and breaker and taker of banks, Lord Melrose, an amusing French newspaper man, Emile Bertonneux by name, of the Paris *Œil de Bœuf*—and last, but not least, the universally popular Tony Jeratczesco, whom Hippy had last seen in the Birdcage at Newmarket some months before, and whose sudden and mysterious disappearance from St. James's Street, which loved him so well, to go to take possession of a property just left him in some outlandish country by a recently-deceased relation, was still the talk of London. Not that London had any reason to be astonished at anything, whether good or evil, that might befall the popular sportsman; for Tony Jeratczesco was altogether a mystery, and nobody knew anything whatever about the man familiarly nicknamed "Cheery and Cheeky," whether he was rich or poor, married or single—patrician by birth or plebeian, nor indeed of what nationality he might boast himself to be, whether Austrian, Hungarian, Bohemian, Pole, Moldavian, Russian, Wallachian, Servian, Bulgarian or Montenegrin—Jew, Christian, Mohammedan, Buddhist—he was good-looking, amiable, refined, and well-dressed, and, moreover, was endowed to a very marked degree with the rare and precious gift of being able to both win and lose money admirably well, in no wise allowing either the smiles or frowns of Fortune to disturb the serene reign of the perfect good taste which presided over all his affairs. When this had been said, and the facts chronicled that he was fond of cards and racing, and always seemed to have plenty of money to justify his interest in both these expensive forms of speculation, and that he enjoyed a close personal friendship with some of the most exalted personages of the realm—the authentic data wherewith to compose a biographical sketch of Count Jeratczesco would be perhaps exhausted, although of course scandal both benevolent and malignant was constantly taking up the wondrous tale of the great success of this mysterious stranger and adventurer in the best of our rude island society—and enriching it with rare and marvellous broideries of fancy.

For once, however, rumour, in dealing with the private affairs of "Cheery and Cheeky," would appear to have been correct. A relative had died—an uncle—and left Tony a mysterious castle and many acres in Moldavia, not far from the little town of Sereth, and the Count had come over to stay with Djavil solely because he knew Hippy Rowan, Lord Melrose, and others *ejusdem farinæ*, would be gathered together under the Pacha's hospitable roof-tree, and he was desirous of making up a house-warming party of friends to accompany him to his new possessions, and enjoy some of the shooting for which the place was famous. This plan met with general approval, and Jeratczesco found no difficulty in forming a pleasant company

to return with him to Moldavia; for though Dick Rowan, Lord Melrose, the Count and the French *chroniqueur* were the only permanent residents beneath the Pacha's roof during this fortnight, the four remaining guest-chambers in the palace were never empty, and there was a constant ebb and flow of all kinds of persons, all more or less invited by the Pacha: people from our Embassy, and people from every other Embassy, people of every rank and position; from a very Broad Church English divine who was sent on, out of sheer mischief, by our Ambassador, Lord Malling, and who came accompanied by his florid, comely, and substantial spouse, both inclined to be slightly querulous about the Holy Places until they had tasted the water-drinking Djavil's incomparable Yquem; to a very beautiful and wayward Italian diva, who came accompanied by two of her adorers, likewise blessed with the gift of song, and who made every one weep (including the *chef* from Bignon's, who listened outside) when she and her friends after dinner (all three slightly intoxicated) interpreted, as only angels fired with a few goblets of St. Marceaux can, Verdi's divine Requiem. So pleasantly did the time pass that it was with regret Colonel Rowan saw the termination of his visit drawing nigh, and heard one morning Jeratczesco, impatient to assume his unwonted *rôle* of host, solemnly announce that in four days' time he should depart to his home in the Karpaks, taking with him the companions he had selected. Then, to celebrate the approaching departure of the popular Hippy Rowan, Djavil gave a sylvan picnic, which, for many months after, was the subject of much gossip on both sides of the Bosphorus, and from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmora—an entertainment destined, alas! to be fraught with fatal consequences to the gentleman in whose honour it was given. The rendezvous was for ten o'clock in the morning, at the sweet waters of Asia—where an insignificant little streamlet loses itself in the Bosphorus; and the guests, about twenty in number, arrived at the place of meeting with surprising punctuality,—some coming with Djavil in his steam-launch, and some from Constantinople.

But for our limited space we would introduce each one of these somewhat notable individualities singly to our readers. Leopold Maryx, the dissipated, irregular and eccentric savant, the renowned specialist for nervous diseases, who had been summoned from Vienna on purpose to see the Sultan; Lord Malling, our delightful but impossible Ambassador; Lord, and especially Lady, Brentford, the champion political bore in petticoats, the victim to high principles, who had bullied her half-witted husband into believing he had a conscience on the occasion of the Reform Bill of 1867, and who, since then, had been dedicating her life to impotent though vigorous denunciations of what she termed the "treachery" of the Tory County Members, and the "infamy" of the County Caucus; Mr. Leonard P. Beacon, the New York millionaire and sportsman, a rough, boasting, but withal good-hearted giant, who, although vulgar beyond even the power of dynamite to purify, was vastly amusing, owing to the fact of his having only begun his boisterous youth at the age of forty-five; Frank Silveyra, the famous Hebrew financier and prince of good fellows from Vienna, and his friend, the no-less-delightful young Jew millionaire and artist, Raphael Sciama, the smart and enterprising little Alec Torquati, who had won our Derby at far distant Epsom the previous year with "Kyber", and, finally, three very beautiful and witty, and altogether attractive, ladies of high degree from Paris, who, accompanied by their husbands, had come all the way from the Seine to the Bosphorus on purpose to be admired, and three very magnificent young Cavaliers of the Guard who had come all the way from the Neva to the Bosphorus on purpose to admire and to manifest their admiration.

Ten carriages awaited Djavil's guests on the Asian coast, and into nine of these the party clambered, the tenth and last being reserved for a valet-de-chambre provided

with all that could be required for the dispensing of light refreshments *en route*. And thus, with servants of the Pacha mounted on faultless little Arab horses racing up and down on either side of the carriages, bringing every now and then from the hindmost vehicle fruit and sandwiches, and bottles of champagne and Bordeaux wherewith the weary travellers might be refreshed, this gay and brilliant party dashed into the interior of Asia at full gallop. It had been arranged that the *déjeuner champetre* should take place in the Forest of Alem-Dagh; and when, after a drive at steeplechase speed of three hours' duration, this spot was reached, it was indeed made manifest that Djavil had neglected nothing to make this fantastic breakfast a success. Here, to this wild, deserted, picturesque spot in the heart of a forest in Asia, a romantic nook apparently miles away from any trace of European civilisation, this very *grand seigneur* had sent the evening before—accompanied by an army of *marmitons*—his *chef*, whose education had been perfected in the famous kitchen on the corner of the Chaussée d'Antin and the Boulevard des Italiens; and with this great artist and his assistants had come vast and numerous vans drawn by bullocks, and containing all the requisites for cooking, and the food, and wine, and silver, and decorations, and furniture,—in fact, all that could be imagined by a wealthy and experienced voluptuary and man of the world to be necessary to make this *déjeuner sur l'herbe* for twenty persons an entertainment worthy of both host and guests.

The viands provided by Djavil (who, being a Turk, possessed that stubborn and rough Oriental palate which apparently can never be trained to a proper appreciation of the most precious and delicate secrets and traditions of *la grande cuisine*) were of a very substantial character; but the long journey had aroused appetites wholly beyond the power of sandwiches and goblets of St. Marceaux to satisfy, and the Pacha's guests eagerly sought consolation in the introductory *œufs à la Béchamel* as a hidden orchestra of the best musicians to be found in Constantinople ravished the Asian air with heaven-inspired passages telling of the jealousy of Amneris and of the ill-fated love of Radamès and Aida.

"This is the most perfect still champagne I ever drank! Where did you get it, Djavil?" And so speaking, Mr Leonard P. Beacon put down his glass and felt in his pocket for the note-book wherein he was accustomed to inscribe such precious addresses.

Life at best is short, but he, Mr. Leonard P. Beacon, had, to speak Hibernicé, only begun when already half through it, and as he always wanted the best of everything, and had no time to lose in personal quests after supreme excellence, he was always glad to take advantage of short cuts through the experience of friends. But the good-natured and adipose Pacha shook his head and smiled.

"No, no, *mon cher*. 'Tis a secret. Were I to tell you, you'd buy it all up and take it back with you to America. But, if you like it, I daresay I can spare you a few dozen. Ask Hassan yourself."

Here a very high-pitched "Oh! how terrible!" from Lady Brentford disturbed the wit winged chatter of the three lovely Seine-side dames with their three adoring flowers of Slav chivalry, disturbed the husbands of these dames, who were engaged in an animated discussion among themselves as to the merits of cooking in oil; disturbed the Dowager Duchess, who, while listening to Raphael Sciama's enthusiastic account of the priceless Giulio Clovio he had unearthed a fortnight before in Venice, had been endeavouring, and not without success, to rekindle by means of a visual current of sympathy with the youthful Alec Torquati the flame of passion in those orbs which had first flashed with that all-devouring fire early in the fifties; disturbed Tony Jeratczesco, who was explaining some Newmarket matters to Baron Silveyra while Lord Brentford and our Ambassador listened; and disturbed, in fact, the original cause of this disturbing cry, the loud-voiced Leopold Maryx, whose remarks to Hippy

Rowan had elicited this startling exclamation from Lady Brentford, who sat next to him and had overheard them.

"Dr. Maryx is saying such awful things," said her ladyship, shaking her head. "He says he believes in people being possessed of devils." Then, even as she spoke, her mind reverted to the terrible events of 1867, those famous "Resolutions" and the way the Borough members had been treated, and she felt that the great Professor might not perhaps after all be mistaken.

"Ah, no! you misunderstood me, Lady Brentford!" exclaimed Maryx, laughing. "What I said was, I saw no reason why, if people were ever possessed of evil spirits, as we are told they used to be, we should believe such things to be impossible now. Is the world any better now than it was on the day when the swine ran down that steep place and were choked in the lake? I didn't say that I believed in such things, for I don't; but, certainly, if I believed they ever existed, I should think they were as likely to exist now as ever."

"Maryx was telling me about the Children of Judas," remarked Hippy Rowan, by way of explanation.

"The Children of Judas!" echoed Emile Bertonneux, the Parisian newspaper man, scenting a possible *article à sensation*—for it is, we suppose, hardly necessary to remind our readers that in so cosmopolitan a gathering the conversation was carried on in French—"Who are they? I had no idea Judas was a *père de famille*."

"It's a Moldavian legend," replied the great specialist. "They say that Children of Judas, lineal descendants of the arch traitor, are prowling about the world seeking to do harm, and that they kill you with a kiss."

"Oh! how delightful!" murmured the Dowager Duchess, glancing at Alec Torquati as if inviting, and indeed expecting, just such homicidal osculatory tribute from the lips of the young Derby winner.

"But how do they get at you to kiss you?" gasped Mr. Leonard P. Beacon, his thirst for information leading him to ignore the fact that his mouth was full of *loup sauce homard*.

"The legend is," said Maryx, "that in the first instance they are here in every kind of shape—men and women, young and old, but generally of extraordinary and surpassing ugliness, but *are* here merely to fill their hearts with envy, venom, and hatred, and to mark their prey. In order to really do harm, they have to sacrifice themselves to their hatred, go back to the infernal regions whence they came—but go back by the gate of suicide—report to the Chief of the Three Princes of Evil, get their diabolical commission from him, and then return to this world and do the deed. They can come back in any form they think the best adapted to attain their object, or rather satisfy their hate: sometimes they come as a mad dog who bites you and gives you hydrophobia—that's one form of the kiss of Judas; sometimes as the breath of pestilence, cholera, or what not—that's another form of the kiss of Judas; sometimes in an attractive shape, and then the kiss is really as one of affection, though as fatal in its effect as the mad dog's bite or the pestilence. When it takes the form of a kiss of affection, however, there is always a mark on the poisoned body of the victim—the wound of the kiss. Last summer, when I was at Sinaia in attendance on the Queen, I saw the body of a peasant girl whose lover had given her the kiss of Judas, and there certainly was on her neck a mark like this:" and Maryx took up his fork and scratched on the tablecloth three X's,—thus, XXX. "Can you guess what that's supposed to signify?" inquired the great physician.

"It looks like a hurdle," remarked Torquati.

"Thirty," exclaimed Lady Brentford.

"Of course," replied Maryx, "thirty—the thirty pieces of silver, of course—the mark of the price of blood."

"*Vous êtes impayable, mon cher!*" exclaimed Djavil, grinning. "Whenever you find it no longer pays to kill your patients you can always make money at the *foires*. Set Hippy Rowan to beat the drum at the door and you sit inside the van telling your wonderful *blagues*, and you'll make a fortune in no time."

"I hope you don't tell those horrible tales to the Sultan, Maryx," said Lord Malling, laughing. "You cure nervous diseases by frightening people to death, I think."

But the great Professor paid no attention to these flippant remarks, he was, indeed, notwithstanding his marvellous intelligence and extraordinary science and experience and skill, at heart a very charlatan and mountebank in his love of a gaping crowd; and the interest he saw depicted on the faces of his listeners delighted him.

"Did you say that in the first instance these Children of Judas are supposed to be very ugly?" inquired Colonel Rowan, his thoughts reverting to the awful face of that man Isaac Lebedenko who had assaulted him on the boat. The incident had almost wholly passed away from his memory until then, though he had noted it down in his carefully-kept diary; and he had, by the way, long ago told himself that he must have been mistaken in what he thought that horrible muffler had disclosed to him, that such things could not be, and that he must have been deceived either by some trick of shadow, or by some prank played on him by gout astride of his imagination.

"Yes," replied Maryx, "so runs the legend. This physical ugliness betokens, of course, the malignant spirit within. At that stage they may be recognised and avoided, or better still, slain; for they only really become dangerous when their hatred has reached such a pitch that they are prompted to seek a voluntary death and re-incarnation in order to completely satisfy their malignancy; for it is by the gate of suicide alone that they can approach the Arch-Fiend to be fully commissioned and equipped to return to earth on their errand of destruction. So if they are killed in their first stage of development, and not allowed to commit suicide, they are extinguished. When they return fully armed with power from Hell, it is too late; they cannot be recognised, and are fatal; for they have at their command all the weapons and artillery of Satan, from the smile of a pretty woman to the breath of pestilence. This voluntary self-sacrifice of hate in order to more fully satisfy itself by a regeneration, this suicide on the *reculer pour mieux sauter* principle, is of course nothing but a parody of the Divine Sacrifice of Love on which the Christian religion is based."

"I'm both sorry and astonished, my dear Leopold," said Baron Silveyra, smiling, "to see that your knowledge of diabolical matters is so faulty. How can you speak of three princes of evil? You must know that there are seventy-two!"

"Ah! you believe in the old system," rejoined Maryx, laughing and pouring himself out a tumblerful of Moutoo Rothschild's "six multiplied by twelve, and then the seven million four hundred and five thousand nine hundred and twenty-six demons of inferior rank. But, *mon cher*, that's altogether out of fashion now; that brings you to six multiplied by one million two hundred and thirty-four thousand three hundred and twenty-one, or the old mysterious 'tetrade' of Pythagoras and Plato counting both ways.* We've altogether changed that down in Hades now." And then the great savant, who delighted above all things in gravely clothing nonsense in a garb of erudition, launched forth into a fantastic and witty description of the internal economy of the Kingdom of Satan, a satire in which he not only displayed an extraordinary amount of mystical knowledge, but which he enlivened by sly and apposite allusions to the Governments represented by Djavil and Lord Malling respectively; and these

* Perhaps the meaning of the Professor will be more apparent if we put the numbers in figures. He speaks of 72 Princes of Darkness (6 multiplied by 12) and 7,405,926 demons of an inferior rank. This last number, so strange apparently, is still the product of 6 multiplied by 1,234,321, and, as our readers can see, 1,234,321 presents to us both from right to left and from left to right the four numbers constituting the mysterious "tetrade" of Pythagoras and of Plato.

gentlemen replying to this banter in the same spirit, and appealing to the other guests, the conversation soon became general.

When the repast was at length over, every one began strolling about the woods, and Hippy Rowan, lighting a cigar, started for a ramble with his old friend Lord Malling. But they had not gone far when their host sent a servant after them to request his lordship to return and speak with him; and so, the Ambassador turning back, Hippy continued his saunter by himself, penetrating by degrees into a somewhat remote and secluded part of the forest, the voices and laughter of the other guests becoming gradually fainter and fainter as he strolled on.

Suddenly, from behind a tree, a man sprang out upon him, and a knife gleamed in the sunlight, swiftly descending upon his heart. Hippy, quick as lightning, leapt to one side, striking up as he did so with his heavy walking-stick at the would-be assassin's arm, and with such force that he sent the knife flying out of the man's hand into the air; and then turning, he dealt the villain a blow on the side of the head which brought him to the ground as one dead. It was the Moldavian, Isaac Lebedenko. Hippy had recognised the eyes gleaming over the dirty-white muffler the moment the man sprang out upon him; and now, as he lay on the ground insensible, there could, of course, be no shadow of doubt about his identity, although he had so fallen, on one side, that the wrapper had not been disarranged from his face. We have said that, although enjoying the well-merited reputation of being the best-natured man in London, Dick Rowan had laid himself open to the reproach of having been most unduly harsh and severe in the numerous wars in which he had been engaged; and this harshness, not to say cruelty, presumably ever latent in his nature, but which seemed only to be called to the surface under certain special conditions closely connected with peril and the excitement engendered thereby, now made itself apparent. The Moldavian had fallen on his side, and the shock of his fall had been so violent that, while one hand lay palm upwards and half open on the trunk of a large fallen tree, the other hand, palm downwards, had been thrown upon its fellow. It was rather a peculiar position for the shock resulting from a fall to have thrown the hands into, and of course indicated that the blow had been so severe that the man had not been able to make any attempt to break his fall, but had sunk to the ground like a doll. Such, at least, was the way Rowan explained the matter as he stood over his prostrate enemy, wondering in his mind how he could possibly contrive to secure the violent would-be assassin until such time as he should be able to obtain assistance and have him handed over to the authorities for punishment; and just as he noticed the position of his hands his eyes caught the gleaming of the knife, which had fallen in the grass a little farther off. Hippy went to where it lay, and picked it up. It was a murderous-looking weapon indeed: broad, double-edged, and very sharp, though rather thick and not long; and fitted with a big round handle of lead, destined, of course, to lend terrible momentum to any blow struck by it. Rowan looked at the knife, and then at the hands of the Moldavian, lying in so diabolically tempting a position; and just then a quivering of the man's legs plainly indicated that he was recovering his senses. If it was to be done at all there was evidently no time to be lost; so Rowan, taking the sharp instrument, and poising it point downwards over the man's hands, which were already beginning to twitch with returning consciousness, and using his huge walking-stick as a hammer, with one powerful blow on the broad heavy handle of the knife, drove it through both the hands of the Moldavian and into the trunk of the tree up to the very hilt. A slight and almost inaudible groan came from behind the white wrapper—that was all, but Rowan could see that under the sting of the sudden pain the man had completely recovered consciousness, for the awful eyes, just visible above the muffler, were now open and fixed upon him.

"You miserable scoundrel!" exclaimed Rowan in German, his voice hoarse with anger. "You may think yourself lucky I didn't kill you like a dog when you lay there at my mercy. But I'll have you punished—never fear. Lie quiet there until I have you sent to prison."

The man said nothing; his awful eyes simply looked at Rowan.

"I have been forced, as you see," continued the Colonel, leisurely taking out a cigar and lighting it, "to nail you to the tree to prevent your escaping. Vermin is often treated so, you know. But I sha'n't inconvenience you for long. In a very few minutes I shall be sending people to unpin you and bind you properly, and have you taken off to prison. We have not seen the last of each other yet, my good friend—believe me, we have not."

Then the man spoke—it was almost in a whisper, but the words came with the horrible liquid lisp Rowan remembered with so much disgust. "No," he murmured, "we have not seen the last of each other yet—we have not."

"There's but little fear, I fancy, of your not being here when I send for you," resumed Rowan, after a moment's pause, during which he and the Moldavian had been steadfastly gazing at each other. "So we needn't waste more time now, and especially as you must be rather uncomfortable. So *à bientôt*." Then, just as he was turning away, he stopped. "In case," said he very quietly, "you should succeed in wriggling away before I send for you, and prefer mutilating your hands to suffering the very many lashes I shall certainly have administered to you, it's as well you should know, perhaps, that when travelling I invariably carry a revolver. I'm without it to-day—very luckily for you—by the merest accident. But I'm not likely to forget it again. So take care."

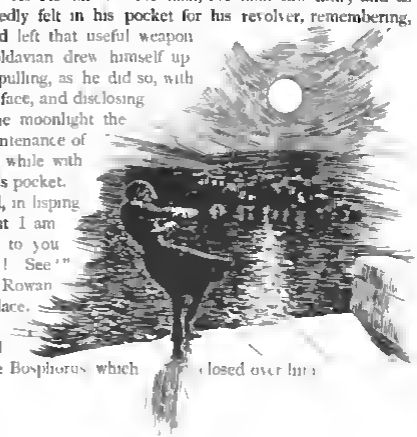
And then Rowan turned and began strolling very leisurely back to where he had left his friends. His last words had not been idly spoken, but were intended to first of all suggest, to the miserable wretch whom he left nailed to the fallen tree, that escape was not altogether impossible, provided he were ready to pay the terrible price of self-mutilation required; and, secondly, to indicate the humiliating nature and severity of the punishment in store for him, that he might decide whether escape at any cost were not preferable to such torture and degradation. For, as a matter of fact, Hippy Rowan, directly the first moment of anger and the accompanying spasm of malignant cruelty had passed away, had decided in his mind to proceed no further in the matter, and by no means to take upon himself the *ennui* and trouble of having the paltry villain more seriously punished than he had already been. Had he had his revolver with him, he would of course have killed the man; but, as it was, he had nailed him as vermin to a tree in a lonely forest in Asia, and there he would leave him to his fate. He might starve to death there, or escape by a terrible mutilation, or possibly with his teeth remove the knife, or somebody might happen to pass by and relieve him—though this last was hardly likely; but at all events he, Hippy Rowan, having warned the villain what to expect in the event of his again molesting him, would have nothing more to do with the matter, and, indeed, not even mention the disagreeable episode to his friends—at least, not at present.

When Rowan got back to the scene of the picnic, he found the preparations for departure just being completed; and in a few minutes all Djavil's guests were once more comfortably ensconced in the carriages and on their way back to the Bosphorus, but this time by another road, which their host had reserved as an agreeable surprise, and which led through scenery of great beauty,—first, after fairy vistas of sylvan solitudes and entanglements, through a squalid though picturesque little village, the inhabitants of which, men and women and children, came running out after the carriages in great excitement, calling out and holding up their hands for alms, then past an encampment of Tziganes, who were singing and playing and dancing; then

across a lonely plain, over which here and there in the far distance, and standing out in bold relief against the horizon now all ablaze with the glory of the setting sun, passed bullock carts full of peasants, grouped together with Oriental and artistic grace, going home after the day's toil; and then at last, as the sun disappeared to their left behind the islands of the Sea of Marmora, to where the splendid panorama of the Bosphorus bathed in twilight lay at their feet. There, by the waterside, the party broke up—all but those persons staying with Djavil going back to Constantinople in a steamboat provided for their convenience by their host, and the others, including of course Hippy Rowan, returning to the Pacha's palace in his Excellency's steam-launch.

The scene returning home was beautiful indeed. It was evening, and the sea was very quiet, for after sundown no boat leaves the Bosphorus, neither is any vessel allowed to enter therein before the dawn; so that the only sound which broke the stillness when the music had died away in the distance was the noise of the screw, which, working in the phosphorescent waters, rolled out showers and sheets of gold as the little steam-launch plodded, plodded, plodded on its course, cleaving and leaving on either side and behind a way of liquid fire. Above were the heavens sparkling with stars, below and around the sea of molten gold, while on either side on the silent banks of the Bosphorus gleamed and streamed innumerable lights from the different harem-windows, at some one of which every now and then an inquisitive head would appear, peeping out at the passing vessel.

All Djavil's guests were tired; so after dinner, a little music and chatting, and some very harmless gambling, they retired to rest much earlier than usual, Rowan being indeed glad when the time came that, unobserved and alone, he could deliver himself up wholly to his reflections, which happened that night to be of a strangely melancholy complexion. His rooms were on the ground floor, the windows indeed opening out on to the garden which sloped down to the marble terrace bordering the Bosphorus; and since it was to meditate rather than to sleep that Rowan sought retirement, the Colonel sent the faithful Adams to bed, lit a cigar and went out, descending to the waterside to enjoy the view. Hardly had he reached the terrace, however, when from its farther end, which lay in shadow, emerged, crawling in the moonlight along the white marble pavement, an awful figure, which he knew but too well—that of Isaac Lebedenko the Moldavian, the man whom he had left but a few hours before nailed to a tree in the forest in Asia. As Rowan saw the man, the man saw him; and as Hippy stepped back and hurriedly felt in his pocket for his revolver, remembering, even as he did so, that he had left that useful weapon on his dressing-table, the Moldavian drew himself up and sprang towards his enemy, pulling, as he did so, with one hand the muffler from his face, and disclosing with hideous distinctness in the moonlight the indescribable horror of the countenance of a monster not born of woman, while with the other hand he fumbled in his pocket.



"The only way!" he gasped, in lisping German. "The only way! But I am ready—glad; for I shall come to you now and you cannot escape me! See!" And so saying, and before Rowan could realise what was taking place, the man stabbed himself to the heart, and with a loud groan fell backwards into the waters of the Bosphorus which closed over him.

CHAPTER III

"And you say you were not frightened?" exclaimed Bertonneux of the *Œil de Bœuf*

Hippy Rowan shook his head and smiled. "No, of course not," he said. Then he added, lowering his voice lest the others should hear him, "Do you know, it's a strange thing, *mon cher*, that never in my life have I known what fear is. It's no boast, of course, but a fact; and you can ask any one who's been with me in danger There are plenty of them about, for I began with Inkermann and only ended with Candahar, not to speak of innumerable little private adventures more or less unpleasant between times, like the one I've just been telling you about, in fact You know me well enough to feel that I'm neither a fool nor a coxcomb, and as a matter of fact this is not exactly courage, I fancy, but rather an absolute inability to entertain such a sentiment as fear Just as some people are born blind and deaf and dumb"

The scene was an immense and lofty chamber, luxuriously furnished, half drawing-room, half smoking room, in Tony Jeratczesco's house in Moldavia, in the Karpak Mountains, and the time about a month after the events recorded in the last chapter had taken place. It had been raining all day as it only can rain in the Danubian principalities, and so the sportsmen had been unable to get out: a particularly deplorable *contretemps*, seeing that, with the exception of the small contingent which had come on from the Bosphorus, and which included Rowan, the French journalist, Lord Melrose, the three very magnificent *Chevaliers Gardes* from the shores of the Neva, and Mr Leonard P. Beacon, the guests of "Cheery and Cheeky" were wild, rough and boisterous neighbouring magnates, many of whom had never travelled beyond Bucharest, and none of whom possessed any of those very rare and precious qualities of heart and head, a combination of which in a fellow-captive can alone reconcile us to the common chain. These Boyards were, indeed, so inconceivably rough and uncouth that Tony Jeratczesco greatly regretted having on the occasion of his taking possession of his property conformed to the almost feudally hospitable custom of the country and invited these loud-voiced Nimrods and their retainers to take up their residence under his roof tree for such time as the sport in the neighbourhood might meet with their approval As it was, however, the mistake had been made these strange beings had been asked and had come, and the evil was past recall, and although at certain times, and especially after dinner, when the alcohol began to lift its voice,

the society of the wealthy barbarians became almost unendurable, it had, of course, to be put up with and made the best of, all that Tony's more civilised friends could do being, almost in self-defence, as it were, to keep to themselves as much as was possible without risking giving offence to their unpleasant fellow-guests by this reserve. The house party was composed entirely of men, which, of course, did not add to the refinement of the gathering; and when, as at the beginning of this chapter, the tedium of a long and rainy day, thoroughly saturated with alcohol and tobacco, had reached the hour preceding midnight, the atmosphere of Jeratczesco's salon, either from an ethical or from a purely social point of view, would assuredly have compared unfavourably with that of most drawing-rooms in Mayfair.

To the French journalist Rowan had already told the story of his horrible adventure with Isaac Lebedenko and of the man's suicide—all of which events, together with minutes of what Maryx had said about the Children of Judas, were found carefully noted down in the Colonel's diary after his death—from which source of information and the testimony of Adams the present authentic account of these strange occurrences is taken; but Mr. Leonard P. Beacon not having heard the story before, Hippy had been prevailed upon to repeat it to him, the question and answer with which this chapter opens being the immediate consequences of the telling of this tale.

Hippy had spoken in a low tone, to avoid attracting attention; but he had not taken into consideration the boisterous nature of his American auditor, who now exclaimed at the top of his voice: "What! do you mean seriously to tell me, Rowan, that you have never known what fear is? that you simply can't be frightened by anything?"

Annoying as it was under the circumstances to have such a question put in so trumpet-tongued a fashion, Hippy plainly saw that the American would insist upon a reply to his thundered query, and that it would in no wise better matters to delay giving it.

"I do," said he simply; and then added, in a half-whisper, "I wish you wouldn't yell so, Beacon."

But it was too late: the half-tipsy Boyards, bored to death, and eager to seize upon any topic of conversation likely to furnish a pretext for violence of language, had heard the question and the answer, and an uproar ensued which Jeratczesco was powerless to quell, and in the course of which the amiability and good breeding of Dick Rowan were both put to a severe test by the clumsy banter and coarsely expressed incredulity of these uncouth noblemen. One gentleman especially, a certain Prince Valerian Eldourdza, who, owing to the fact of his having been educated at a Lycée in Paris, was looked upon as the Admirable Crichton of that part of Moldavia, pressed Hippy very hard, plying him with most personal and impertinent questions as to his belief in a future life, future punishment, the devil, and so forth, and at last, indeed, going so far as to solemnly declare that not only did he not believe in Colonel Rowan's inability to experience terror, but that he would himself undertake under a penalty of £4000 to frighten him. This somewhat offensive boast had, in the first instance, fallen from Eldourdza's lips in the heat of excitement, and probably without the speaker himself attaching any very great meaning or importance to his words, but the statement having been received with vociferous approval by the other Boyards, his Highness had been constrained to repeat the bet, and the second time give it a more specific form. "One hundred thousand francs," he repeated, bringing his very small and very unclean fist down on the table with much violence, "that I frighten you, Colonel, before you leave here—that is, of course, always provided you're not leaving at once."

"My friend is staying with me another month," interposed Jeratczesco, rather angrily. "But I can't allow such bets to be made in my house, Eldourdza. I hate practical jokes—we have quite enough of that kind of folly in England."

"They're afraid already!" sneered a very unpleasant-looking old Moldavian statesman, all lip and nose, chewing at his cigar in the corner of his mouth after the fashion of a dog with a bone.

"You leave this to me, Tony," said Rowan to his host, speaking quickly, and in English, then, turning to Eldourdza: "Let's understand each other plainly, Prince. What do you mean by fright? Of course you can startle me by jumping out from a dark corner, or by any trick of that kind. I make no bet about that kind of thing, of course; but I'll bet you an even hundred thousand francs, if you like, or a hundred and fifty thousand francs, that you don't make me experience what is generally and by every one understood by the word fright—a sentiment of fear, or of anything even remotely resembling fear. How shall we define it, for we must be clear on this point?"

"Hair standing on end and teeth chattering," suggested Mr. Leonard P. Beacon, who was greatly delighted at the turn affairs had taken, foreseeing an adventure and new experience of some kind.

"Exactly," replied Eldourdza, who had been consulting in a whisper with his friends, and absorbing yet another gobletful of champagne strongly laced with brandy. "Let those very words be used if you like—I'll bet you an even hundred and fifty thousand francs—two hundred thousand if you like" (Hippy nodded)—"that before you leave this place, four weeks from to-day, you shall be so frightened that your hair will stand on end, your teeth will chatter, and what's more, you'll call for help"

"Very well," assented Rowan, laughing, "*C'est entendu*, but I sha'n't make you go so far as that, my dear Prince. I shall be quite ready to pay up if you do more than merely startle me in the way I spoke of just now—by some sudden noise, or jumping out at me, or some such silly prank. Anything even approaching fear, much less terror, of course, and I pay up at once" "And," he added good-naturedly—for he was fond of winning money, and the certainty of this £8000 was very pleasant to him—"luckily for you, Eldourdza, I happen to have the money to pay with if I lose. I was on every winner the last day at Baden—couldn't do wrong—and sent it all on to Gunzburg at once, where it is intact, for I didn't want to be tempted to gamble till I got to St Petersburg"

And so this strange bet was made, and duly noted down with the approval of all, even Jeratczesco withdrawing his objection when he saw the very evident satisfaction with which the Colonel regarded what he felt sure to be the only possible result of this absurd wager.

But if Hippy Rowan had foreseen the wholly unexpected way in which this waiting day by day, night after night, and hour by hour for the surprise—of course of an apparently unpleasant nature—which Eldourdza and his friends must be preparing for him—had he, we say, foreseen the peculiar and unprecedented way in which this really absurd suspense was destined gradually, and by almost imperceptible degrees, to affect his nerves in the course of the next month—he would most assuredly have let the Prince's silly wager pass unnoticed. And what made this never-absent feeling of care, of perpetual caution, of unceasing vigilance, the more acutely irksome to Hippy, was that these novel sensations could be ascribed but to one altogether disagreeable and detestable cause—namely, the advance of old age. His experience of life had told him that the constitution of a man who had lived as he had lived was apt to break down suddenly, no matter how apparently robust it might be; the supports, the foundation, which kept the structure in its place and seemingly firm and upright, having been little by little, and very gradually but very surely, removed in the course of years, the nights of which had been worn to morning in the fatigue of pleasure, and the days of which had been scornful of repose. He had seen innumerable friends of his, apparently as strong and vigorous as himself, suddenly give way in this fashion—fall down like a house of cards, as it

were, and be swept away into the outer darkness. Could it be owing to the approach of some such sudden and disastrous conclusion to his mundane affairs, that he found, day by day, as the next four weeks wore on, his nerves, hitherto apparently of steel, becoming more and more unstrung by this suspense, the cause of which was in reality so utterly puerile and contemptible? This was very certainly not his first experience of suspense: he had been in danger of his life very often, and on a few occasions this danger had been imminent for a considerable period of time, and yet never could he recall having felt before this uneasiness of mind, this perpetual questioning of his heart, which he now experienced while merely waiting for these boorish savages to play some more or less gruesome, and even perhaps dangerous practical joke on him. It must be old age; it could be nothing else—old age, and the beginning, perhaps, of a general breaking-up of the system; the first intimation, as it were, of the second and final payment about to be required of him for those extravagances by Seine side already alluded to, those myrtles sacred to the sparrow-drawn goddess, those prolonged and oft-repeated saunters from midnight to dawn arm-in-arm with Bacchus and baccarat,—such outriders of Death's chariot, Rowan told himself, it must be, that induced him, greatly to his own surprise, to waste so much of his time twisting and turning over in his mind all kinds of possible and impossible speculations as to how these wretched Moldavians were going to try and frighten him. This led him to examine carefully his apartments every night before retiring to rest, and see that his revolver had not been tampered with and was safely under his pillow. Of course this very abnormal condition of mind, which in no wise even remotely resembled fear, and was one merely of perpetual watchfulness, was of very gradual growth, and Happy Rowan was throughout the whole course of its development, until just before the end, sufficiently master of himself to conceal his feelings, not only from his friends, but even from his valet, the omniscient Adams, and the very visible change in the Colonel's appearance and manner, which by-and-bye came to be remarked, was ascribed by all—and in a great measure justly ascribed—to a very severe chill which he caught shortly after the night of the wager, and which confined him to the house, and indeed to his room, for many days. Neither Prince Eldourdza nor any one else had made any allusion whatever, in Rowan's hearing, to the wager since the night on which it had been made and formally noted down; and this fact in itself, this studied silence, became in the course of time, and as Rowan's nervous irritability increased, a source of annoyance to him, and induced him at length, suddenly, one morning, when they were all at breakfast together, to boldly allude to the matter, which was becoming more and more constantly uppermost in his mind.

"Pardon me, Prince," said he, smiling, and with well-assumed carelessness, "if I allude to the matter of our wager, which you seem to have forgotten, for you have only ten days left now, and——"

"Plenty of time!" interrupted Eldourdza roughly. "Forgotten it? Not I—have I?" he continued, turning to his friends. "You know whether I have forgotten it or not!" Significant and sinister grins and much shaking of heads in negation responded to this appeal,—a pantomime which excited the Colonel's curiosity not a little.

"Well," said he, "I'm glad to hear it, for I shouldn't like to take your money without your having had some semblance of a run for it. All I wanted to tell you was this, and I feel sure you'll agree with what I now say. Of course I've no idea what kind of prank you're going to play on me, to endeavour to frighten me, but no doubt it will be as horrible and awful a thing as you can concoct, for I suppose you've no intention of making me a present of two hundred thousand francs."

"Certainly not!" laughed Prince Valerian; "if you get it at all you'll have to pay dear for it, believe me."

"Very well," replied Hippy—"anything you like, but that's just what I wanted to speak about. Of course I'm at your disposal to do anything you like with, and to try and frighten in any way and every way you can contrive; but you can easily understand that there must be a limit to my endurance, otherwise you'd make me look like a fool. What I mean is, that you're at perfect liberty, say, to send any ghost or vampire or wild beast or devil, or anything else you can think of, to my room to try and frighten me, and for that purpose I am glad to lend you all the aid in my power. As it is, I leave my door unlocked every night now, as perhaps you know. But there must be some limit to this,—I mean that your endeavour to frighten me must have some limit in time, and can't go on for ever. Suppose we put it at one hour—for one hour let your ghost or devil do its worst: then at the end of that time, if it has failed to frighten me, your goblin will become merely a nuisance, and I think I shall be justified in extinguishing it, don't you?"

"Most assuredly," replied Eldourdza. "In less than an hour; we don't ask for an hour—half an hour will do,—after half an hour you are perfectly at liberty to do as you like—provided always," he added grimly, "that by that time you are not half dead with fright."

"Very well, then," rejoined Hippy: "so that's understood. After half an hour from the time your test, whatever it may be, begins, I shall be free to use any means I care to adopt to put a stop to this test, provided by that time, of course, I have not felt anything even remotely resembling alarm. As in the event of your test being something really offensive and disagreeable to me I should probably use my revolver, I thought it only fair to have this plainly understood, so that what is really only a silly practical joke may not, by a misunderstanding, end in a tragedy."

The Prince nodded in acquiescence. "You are quite right," he said. "After half an hour do as you please. But you're mistaken in looking upon this as a practical joke, Colonel Rowan: it will be no joke, and may indeed, even against your will, end in a tragedy."

As may be readily imagined, these few mysterious words of menace from the man pledged, in some way or other, to cause him within ten days' time to experience the novel, but doubtless unpleasant, sensation of terror, did not tend to bring the Colonel to a more restful state of mind; and his never-ending speculations as to what scheme these savages might perchance be planning wherewith to frighten him began again after this conversation to torment his brain with renewed persistency. Of course Eldourdza would do all he could to win his bet—not for the sake of the money, perhaps, for that could be nothing to him, but for the pleasure and delight of triumph; and, equally of course—at least so Hippy told himself, this desired fright the Prince and his friends would only endeavour to bring about by some pseudo-supernatural agency, for they could hardly imagine that any of the vulgar dangers of life—say an attack of many adversaries, whether men or brutes, peril from water, fire, or what not, in fact, any of the thousand-and-one not uncommon evils which threaten human existence—could possibly affright so hardened and experienced a soldier and traveller as he was, a man whose record of perilous adventures was so well known. The supernatural, therefore, the terrors which owe their horror to the fact of their being inexplicable, the power of them unfathomable, the awful enemies which may be lurking crouched behind the last breath of life ready to spring upon us as the heart stops beating, such, or rather the semblance of such, would doubtless be alone the influences which these wild barbarians would seek to bring to bear upon his nerves to try them. And when this probability having been suggested to his imagination, Colonel Rowan began recalling to mind all the gruesome stories he had ever heard of about ghosts, hobgoblins, and the like, his restlessness and nervous

watchfulness (to which he only gave way when in the privacy of his own chamber, of course) so increased as the last ten days sped by, that at length Adams, who slept in the next room, remarking his master's condition, arranged, without, of course, the knowledge of any one, to keep watch and ward over the Colonel during these last few nights by means of an aperture high up in the wall, through which he could obtain a perfect view of his master's sleeping apartment, and see all that took place therein.

So it came to pass that on the last night but two Hippy never retired to rest until the dawn, having decided, after mature reflection, that no matter what absurd practical joke his friends might be going to play on him, he would cut a less ludicrous figure in his dressing-gown than in bed, and that it might indeed be advisable to be thus prepared to follow the tormenting masqueraders from his chamber to punish them elsewhere, and before the whole household, in the event of their conduct proving too outrageous. And so, after having as usual carefully examined every hole and cranny of his sleeping apartment (as the unobserved Adams from his peephole above saw him do very plainly), and lighted many tapers about the old-fashioned and vast chamber, and put many cheering logs upon the fire, the Colonel lit a cigar and began pacing up and down the room, turning over of course in his mind the perpetual question—"What are these uncouth madmen going to do?" and the query for ever followed by the usual reflection—"They can do as they please, provided they don't, by their folly, make me look a fool." There would probably be the rattling of chains and bones, and some very cleverly contrived apparition, and even, in fact, some real danger, perhaps, for these men were really perfect savages, who would stop at nothing to attain their end; and Hippy would certainly not have been surprised to have found a box of dynamite concealed beneath his bed.

"Luckily, this is the last night but two," he said to himself—"and after all this bet has taught me one thing I never plainly realised before, and in a certain sense I have really lost the wager, for there is one thing I am afraid of, and very much afraid of, more and more afraid of every minute, and that is being made a fool of." Then he stopped in his perambulation and stared at himself in the looking-glass. Yes; he was certainly growing old: the grey hairs he cared nothing about—they were entirely insignificant; and the crows' feet and wrinkles were of no importance—they did not in the least annoy him; but the eyes, ah! the eyes were losing their light—that light that had disported itself over so many beautiful things. But then even a youthful face would look sad in so mystic a mirror—for it was very old, and evidently Venetian, and had doubtless been in that room in that castle in that remote corner of Moldavia for years and years, and seen perchance strange things,—and was destined (who could tell?) before three nights were over to reflect images of even more fantastic terror than had ever darkened it before. What a pity that this old looking-glass could not recall some of the most pleasant images that had been reflected in it in the long ago to keep him company that night! If he stared at it long enough, would he not, perhaps, at length perceive far, far away, there in the most remote and distant and least lighted corner of the room, reflected the fair sad face of some Moldavian dame who had wept and kissed and loved and lost in the old days of the Hospodars?

> "Les miroirs par les jours abreges de Décembre
> Songent—telles les eaux captives—dans les chambres,
> Et leur melancolie a pour causes lointaines
> Tant de visages doux fanes dans ces fontaines
> Qui s'y voyaient naguére embellis de sourires"

Then, drawing up a comfortable armchair before the blazing logs, he seated himself, and taking up *Le Rouge et le Noir*, which he happened to find lying on the table by

his side, ere long had read himself to sleep over the marvellous narrative of the vicissitudes of Julien Sorel, only awaking, indeed, when the

"fair-faced sun,
Killing the stars and dews and dreams and desolations of the night,"

was plainly visible through the curtains, and the noises of the awakening household warned him that another day had begun. Then he arose and went to bed, fondly believing that by this little comedy he was deceiving the omniscient Adams, who, as a matter of fact, perched on a step-ladder in the adjoining apartment, had kept an unceasing watch over his master. That day, Rowan's last day on earth, passed without any incident worthy of notice. Jeratczesco announced at breakfast that he had engaged a band of *laoutari*—gypsy minstrels—to enliven his friends, but that, as he only expected them to arrive late that night, his guests would not have the opportunity of enjoying their wild and delightful music until the morning.

"I shall lodge them in your wing of the house, where they'll be quiet," explained Tony to Colonel Rowan later on in the day, when they happened to be alone. "You know how beautiful some of these *tsigane* women are, and how jealously guarded by their men. I don't want a row here, and there's no knowing what mad folly Eldourdza and his friends might be up to when drunk."

And that the prudent Tony was quite justified in taking all precautionary measures to ensure peace and tranquillity during the sojourn of the gypsies beneath his roof was amply proved that very night when they arrived late, for the Moldavian magnates, who, with Eldourdza at their head, would seem to have intentionally got drunk rather earlier than usual that evening, were only with the greatest difficulty restrained by their host from rushing out into the moonlit courtyard and embracing the women of the minstrel band, as they were seen and heard passing and chattering and singing on their way to their quarters. The arrival of these gypsies, and the prospect of the break which their performances would make in the monotony of the daily life at the château (which, by the way, all save the most enthusiastic sportsmen would have found intolerably tedious), greatly enlivened Hippy Rowan's spirits; and when he retired for the night—the last night but one of this absurd waiting for surprises, as he reminded himself with a smile—he opened his window and looked out across the quadrangle to the lights in the rooms occupied by the wandering musicians, wondering whether indeed this band contained any of those really beautiful women such as he remembered having remarked among the Strelna gypsy musicians of Moscow,—women unlike any other women to be found in any class or country in the world, and whose peculiar charm is as indescribable as it is indisputable, possessing as it does a power partaking of the supernatural, springing as it were from a fountain of infernal fascination. What a splendid night! And nearly Christmas too, the very season for ghostly masquerading, and—— But hark! a woman's voice singing

Hippy leaned out and listened. The voice was low and very sweet, though the woman singing was evidently engaged in some other occupation which absorbed her attention, for there would be careless pauses in her song, the words of which in a Roumanian dialect ran somewhat as follows:

"Love shot his arrow o'er the Sea,
And all the waters leaped with joy,
Lifting their foam wreathed arms in glee,
To bid the sunlight hold the boy,
But the Sun said
'My beams are shed
To cheer with flowers the lonely dead.'"

Here the singing ceased for a moment, but presently a man's voice took up the song, singing in the same careless fashion, stopping every now and then.

"Death spread his pinions o'er the Sea,
And all the waves with storm thrilled breath
In sobs besought the Moon that she
Might break the fear plumed wings of Death.
But the Moon cried
'My silver tide
Will only——'"

But here a merry burst of laughter interrupted the singer, and though for some time after Rowan could hear the voices of the gypsies laughing and talking, he could not distinguish what was being said, and there was no more singing.

"What a strange people!" murmured Rowan to himself, as he closed the window, "and what suitable neighbours to have on such a night as this, when at any moment now I may expect to see a cavalcade of ghosts come galloping into the room!"

Then the watchful Adams saw his master make his usual careful inspection of the room, seat himself by the fire, take up Stendhal again, and read himself to sleep.

Suddenly Rowan awoke, roused by a sound that stole into his ears very gradually and very gently, but which, when his drowsy faculties had understood its meaning, stirred them to instant activity—the sound of weeping. He sprang to his feet and looked around the room. He was alone; the apartment was brilliantly illuminated, thanks to two large lamps and several tapers in grandoles, and he could plainly see into the farthest corner: nobody—no animated creature was visible. He listened, but not a sound broke the stillness of the night. He must have been dreaming. But no—hark! there it was again, the sound of weeping, of some one in great and bitter distress: it came from the corridor, and not far from his chamber door. Should he go and see what it was? Could this be any part of the Moldavians' masquerading? Surely not! Hardly would they begin their attempt to frighten a man by such heartrending expressions of anguish, which could evoke but pity and compassion. Again! Oh, what a wealth of woe!

And a woman too. the long-drawn, gasping, tear-clogged suspiration was pitched in a key of peculiar pathos which that treasury of divine tenderness, a woman's heart, alone can find to woo compassion. Again,—yes, certainly a woman could it perchance be one of the *laoutari*? The corridor led to the part of the house where they were sleeping, and, so far as he knew, they were the only women in the house except the servants. Surely Eldourdza had nothing to do with this, and even if he had, what then? Had not this drunken Moldavian boor already occupied his mind quite long enough with speculations as to what he might and what he might not be about to do? Let him do as he pleased, and what he liked, and go to the devil!

There was a woman in terrible distress just outside his door, and he, Hippy Rowan, must go to her without delay—that was very clear. So, taking his revolver in his hand in case of need, Rowan advanced, opened the door wide, and looked out into the sombre corridor, Adams, greatly frightened, watching his master the while, and, having heard nothing, was at a loss to understand the Colonel's conduct. Even as he opened the door Rowan saw that he had guessed aright, and that it was a woman who was giving utterance to these most pitiful and heartrending expressions of anguish. There she lay, not very near his door after all, weeping bitterly, her face buried in her hands—as if she had been praying on her knees for mercy, and in a very agony of supplication had fallen forward. Rowan saw at once that those white and shapely hands must belong to a young woman; and so his voice assumed a tone of very special tenderness and compassion, as he said, in the Roumanian dialect in which he had heard the gypsies singing,—

"What is it, lady? Can I help you?"

The mourner, who apparently had not remarked the opening of the door, at the sound of Hippy's voice ceased her lamenting, and after a moment's pause slowly raised her head, withdrawing her hands from her face as she did so, and revealing to Rowan's astonished eyes the most faultlessly lovely countenance he had ever gazed upon in living woman—a countenance different to anything Hippy had ever seen. Was it the moonlight pouring in through the uncurtained windows which gave it that ethereal radiance? Who could she be? That she was not a gypsy was very evident, for her skin was of the most fine and delicate fairness, and her hair, which fell in caressing curls over her forehead, of a soft and tender brown. Moreover her dress was entirely unlike that of a *Zigane*, both in colour and in form, being all black, and fashioned, so far as Rowan could see, as that of a member of some religious order, the beautiful face being, as it were, framed round about in a covering not unlike a cowl. Rowan had heard, he thought, of some sisterhood in the neighbourhood: perhaps this fair mourner belonged to such a community;—at all events she was assuredly a very lovely woman, and it behoved him, both as a man of heart and as a man of taste, to console her in her sorrow. But to attain this desired end, of course the first and most necessary step would be to make himself understood, and that, apparently, he had not so far succeeded in doing. The lustrous violet eyes looked at him, indeed, with startled surprise and fawn-like timidity, though there was assuredly nothing redoubtable in the kind aspect of Hippy's handsome face, and he had instinctively hidden the revolver in his pocket the moment he had seen the pathetic prostrate figure in the corridor; but beyond this half-frightened expression there was nothing to be recognised but sorrow in that lovely countenance: not the slightest indication that his words had conveyed to the mourner's mind any idea of sympathy and compassion. Again he addressed her, this time in no dialect, but in the purest Roumanian, and in a still more tender and sympathising tone than before; but the look of timid wonder in the sweet Madonna face remained unchanged. Then, feeling that the situation was becoming rather ludicrous, he said, this time speaking in German and beckoning towards the open door of his apartment,—

"Lady, let me beg of you to tell me what troubles you! Come into my room and rest and warm yourself. Believe me, there is nothing I would not gladly do to be of service to you. You have only to command me, I am an Englishman, a gentleman, and a soldier—so you may trust me. Let me help you, lady, come, I beg of you." Then, after a pause, as the mourner neither spoke nor moved, Hippy bowed, and, motioning her to follow him, walked slowly into his room, turning every now and then and repeating his gesture of invitation,—she the while remaining upon her knees,—looking after him, indeed, but making no attempt to rise and follow.

Although Adams had at no time lost sight of his master, whose back, as he seemed to be engaged in conversation with some invisible person far down the corridor, had always been within the range of the faithful servant's vision, still it was with a feeling of great relief that he now saw the Colonel come back into the room unharmed, although the expression of tenderness and pity in his master's face rather puzzled the man, as did also the Colonel's conduct in turning when he had reached the fireplace and looking anxiously back towards the door which he had left open behind him, as if expecting and indeed longing for the arrival of some visitor. At length, after the lapse of a few minutes—a delay which, though brief, the servant could plainly see his master bore impatiently, the longed-for visitor slowly emerged from the darkness of the corridor until she stood framed in the doorway, against one side of which, as if to support herself, she lightly placed a small white hand. It was thus Adams saw the slender black-robed figure of a sweet girl mourner appear, and for the first time in his life was astonished, nay, astounded rather, at the marvellous resemblance

in depth of tenderness, in purity of sorrow-hallowed loveliness, between this nocturnal lady visitor to his master and a Madonna from a canvas, say, of Raphael, standing apparently before him clothed in flesh.

Perhaps some such fantastic idea of an incarnation of one of Raphael's Holy Virgins occurred to Rowan as he bowed low and advanced to welcome his fair visitor, for this time he addressed her in Italian, thanking her for the great honour she was doing him, making all kinds of graceful and very Italian protestations of sympathy and respect, and concluding a very pretty speech by begging her not to stay there on the threshold, but to come in and seat herself by the fire; adding that if his presence were in any way distasteful to her he would at once withdraw and leave her in undisturbed possession of the room. But this attempt, clothed in the choicest Tuscan, to inspire confidence, met with no greater measure of success than had attended its Roumanian and German predecessors. The sweetly sorrowful lady stood on the threshold in the same timid attitude, staring at the Colonel with no abatement in the tender melancholy of her face, but apparently in no wise understanding his words, and even, indeed, ignoring his gesture inviting her to enter and be seated.

What was to be done? He could hardly, of course, take this lovely girl-Madonna in his arms and drag her into his room by force; and yet it seemed intolerably absurd, and indeed impossible, to leave her standing there in the doorway. Why had she come even to the threshold of his door, if she had not intended coming farther in the event of her seeing nothing to alarm her? Of course, and beyond all doubt, if he could only make her understand his sympathy and respect, and that she need have no fear of him, she would come in and perhaps tell him the cause of her distress, and let him help her, and on the other hand, knowing so many languages and even dialects and patois as he did, it seemed almost impossible that he should not be able at length to hit upon some form of speech by which he could convey to this most perfect incarnate type of spiritual purity and loveliness the expression of his devoted homage.

So he started off on a wild polyglottic steeplechase, making protestations of respect and sympathy and offers of aid and friendship in every language and dialect he could remember, from his native English to the patois spoken by the Jews in White Russia. But all to no purpose, and at length he was constrained to pause and acknowledge that he was utterly defeated.

"You're very beautiful," said he at last, with a sigh, speaking in his native English, the inability of his fair auditor to understand him possessing at least the meagre and thankless advantage of allowing him to express his admiration in words no matter how impassioned, provided, of course, he took care his face should not betray the significance and ardour of his speech—"the most beautiful woman I think I ever saw; but you're a beautiful riddle, and I don't know how to read you. What language can you speak, I wonder? Only the language of

love, perhaps! Were I to kneel down there before you, or take you in my arms and kiss you, in what language would you repulse me, or——?"

Here he paused, greatly surprised: were his eyes deceiving him, or was at length a change stealing over the Madonna face, and the timidity and sadness in it slowly giving place to an expression of some brighter sentiment? That she could not understand the language he was speaking he felt sure, for he had already addressed her in it, and his words had evidently failed utterly to convey any meaning to her mind. But surely there was a difference now, and something he had said, or some gesture he had made, or some expression in his face, had been pleading to her, for the great shadow of melancholy was slowly passing from her. But between the language, the English he had used before and that which he had just spoken, what difference was there? None, of course, save in the sense: then the words had been of respect and sympathy, now of love and tenderness. Could it be that by some marvellous intuition her woman's instinct had at once divined the more tender words? or indeed was it not possible, nay, likely, that in speaking them he had involuntarily let their meaning be reflected in his eyes, and that she had read it there?

But then such tenderness and affection were not displeasing to her; and this Mask of the Madonna, this ideal type of womanly purity, could be lighted by the joy of love.

The thought set Rowan's blood coursing through his veins like fire, and made his heart beat as if he had been but twenty. He must see, and at once: he would speak to her again in words of affection, and let his eyes partly and by degrees interpret what he said, carefully of course, and always guided by what he should see her eyes reply to his, lest he should offend her. And so he began telling this lovely woman in very low, quiet and grave tones, but in words of great tenderness, how fair he found her, and as he spoke his eyes expressed the meaning of his words more and more clearly and ardently as he recognised with ever-growing delight that the Madonna face was being gradually illuminated and transfigured by joy, as word after word of ever-increasing passion, echoed in tender glances from his eyes, fell from his lips.

And as he spoke he did not advance towards her, but only clasped his hands and stood still far from her, looking at her in the doorway; while she, more and more visibly affected by his ever-growing emotion, first withdrew her hand from the side of the door where she had leant it, and pushed back the cowl from her face a little, still further disclosing, by so doing, the wavy wealth of soft brown curls, and then, as the violet eyes became by degrees lighted with great joy and the sweet lips melted to a smile of ineffable rapture, clasped both hands together just beneath her cheek in an attitude of girlish and innocent delight.

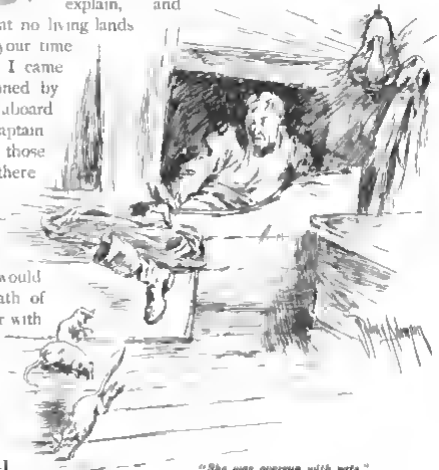
So she stood until the fervour of Rowan's words and voice and eyes rose to an ecstasy of passion, and then leaning forward her head, not indeed to hide the sweet blushes which were rising to her cheeks, but as a child eager to rush to a beloved embrace, and her eyes answering the ardour she read in those she gazed into, she half stretched forth her arms as if her longing to twine him in a caress were but restrained by maiden bashfulness. Rowan saw the gesture, stepped forward, opened wide his arms, and the girl Madonna rushed to his embrace, nestling her blushing face upon his neck, as in a rapture of fondness he clasped her to his bosom.

At the same moment a terrible cry rang through the room and through the house, waking the *tsiganes*, who sprang from their beds in mad terror, and startling the stupid Moldavians, who, despairing of really frightening Rowan, had decided on merely making him look a fool, and were at that very moment creeping up the staircase, dressed in absurd costumes and armed with monster squirts and all kinds of grotesque instruments—the cry of a strong man in an agony of terror. The horrified Adams saw his master hurl the woman from him with great violence,

snatch his revolver from his pocket, discharge three chambers of it at her in quick succession, and then reel and fall forward on his face, while she, rising from the floor apparently unhurt, glided from the apartment by the still open door. When Adams reached his master's side he found him quite dead, the body presenting two most remarkable peculiarities: first a very strong odour of musk—and secondly, on the neck three small wounds shaped like three X's joined together. The medical man, a German, who was immediately called in, ascribed the death of Colonel Rowan to aneurism of the heart, and declined to attach the least importance to the three small wounds or bites on the neck, the post-mortem examination proving that so far as the cause of death was concerned the physician was right in his conjecture.

As for the strange lady with the Madonna face, Adams was far too shrewd a man of the world to make known the extraordinary circumstance to every one. He told Tony Jeratczesco, and inquiries were made; but no such person had been seen or heard of, and so the matter dropped; and it is only within the last few months that Mr. Adams, now retired from his delicate and difficult profession of valet and living in the neighbourhood of Newmarket, could be prevailed upon to give a detailed account of all the strange facts connected with the death of his master, show Hippy Rowan's diary, and complete his story by producing a photograph which he himself had taken of the dead man's neck, on [illegible] which is plainly visible the imprint of the Kiss of Judas.

"YOU'RE quite right, sir!" said the mate. "As you say, a man can't follow the sea for twenty or thirty years without meeting with a good many things that he can't explain, and that no living landsman will believe if you waste your time telling him about them. Once I came across a schooner that was manned by monkeys. There wasn't a soul aboard of her except monkeys, from the captain down to the Jemmy Ducks, and those monkeys had fitted out that there schooner and gone a piratin' in her. What's the good of my telling that to any man ashore? I don't believe there's a man, except he's a sailorman, who would believe it if I took my Bible oath of it. And yet I saw that schooner with my own identical eyes; and what's more, I was aboard of her in company of those monkeys for eight mortal days, so I know what I'm talking about.



"She was overrun with rats"

"It happened about ten years ago, or may be twelve—I don't keep any private log book, and I can't always remember when—However, I was second mate at the —bound from London to Ryo Jenneero —just when—anything did happen. time of a brig—the *Jane G. Mather* with a general cargo. The

captain's name was Simmons—'Old Bill Simmons' we used to call him, seeing as he had a younger brother, Jim Simmons, in the Mediterranean trade. He wasn't a bad sort, and the brig was a middling comfortable craft, barring that she was so overrun with rats that you couldn't turn in at night without battening down your blankets over your face to keep them from trimming your nose down to what was their idea of a ship-shape nose. We were strong-handed, having eighteen men all told before the mast, besides two mates and a bosen.

"We made a good run as far as the Line, and then we had baffling light winds and calms for the next three weeks. We were in about five degrees south, and Cape Saint Roque bearing five hundred miles west, when we sighted this schooner that I'm telling you about. I came on deck that morning at eight o'clock, and the first thing I saw was a schooner under full sail about a mile to windward of us, there being at the time a light breeze from the south, and not much more than enough to keep steerage way on the brig. The schooner was acting in a very curious sort of way. Her sheets were hauled flat aft, and every little while she'd come up in the wind and shake for a minute, and then she'd pay off on the other tack. Sometimes she'd lie close to the wind, and then again she'd fall off till she had the wind nearly on her quarter.

"'Either she's lost her rudder, or all hands have gone to breakfast and left her to shift for herself,' said I to the mate, after looking at the schooner for a little while.

"'She's deserted, that's what she is,' said the mate. 'We sighted her at daybreak this morning, and I've been watching her pretty close. There ain't a soul aboard her, according to my idea. Well! I'll turn in now, and I expect she'll run into us before eight bells if we don't keep a sharp look-out.'

"About two hours later the captain came on deck, and I could see that he took a good deal of interest in the schooner. The breeze had died out by this time, and there wasn't hardly breath enough to fill the schooner's sails. She lay not half a mile from us, and we could hear her booms creak as she rolled with the swell that was setting in from the eastward. It was clear enough that she wasn't deserted, for we could see a lot of niggers, as we supposed, moving about her decks, though there was nobody at the wheel. All at once the old man says, 'Mr. Samuels! we'll board that schooner and see what is the matter with her. Take the port quarter boat and four men, and find out what she means by yawing all over the South Atlantic. Tell the captain that this ain't no Ratcliffe Highway, nor no Playhouse Square, and a decent schooner ain't no right to be staggering drunk at this time of day.'

"Old Bill was always fond of his joke. Once he towed the cook overboard for fifteen minutes, because he would put too much salt in the grub. You see he thought the man would get enough salt in his system while he was soaking astern of us to make him remember to use less of it in his cooking. But it didn't seem to do no good, and it pretty near drowned the cook.

"Well, I sung out for the men to clear away the boat, and then we pulled over to the schooner. When

"We pulled over to the schooner

we came close to her I saw that she hadn't any name on her stem nor anywhere else, and that what we had taken to be niggers were nothing less than big monkeys—baboons was their correct rating, I believe. Nobody had the manners to heave us a line, but we had no trouble in boarding the schooner. The monkeys were crowded together, watching us over the rail, but keeping as grave and quiet as a lot of man-of-war's men. On the quarter-deck, all alone by himself, was an old white-haired monkey, that we took to be the captain, as he afterwards proved to be. He was sitting on the skylight, and was a great sight too dignified to be seen watching us.

"We made the boat fast and all hands of us climbed aboard the schooner. The monkeys fell back quite respectful as we came aboard, and I could see that they were a pretty dispirited-looking lot. The deck was all in a litter, and there was nobody at the wheel or on the look-out. At first I didn't understand that the schooner was manned entirely by monkeys, so I went straight into the cabin to see if there were any signs of white men, or even niggers aboard her. The cabin was as neglected as the deck, and there wasn't a soul below. So I came on deck again, and after telling one of the men to have a look in the fokesell, to see if there was anybody there, I went up to the old white-haired monkey and says,—

"'We came aboard to see if you wanted anything. If so be as you are the captain of this schooner, perhaps you'll tell me if you need a navigator, or a carpenter, or anything of the sort?'

"The monkey didn't say a word, but he bowed as polite as if he was a Frenchman. Meanwhile the other monkeys had gathered in a circle around us, and were whining in a mournful sort of way. Just then the man who had searched the fokesell came up and said that there wasn't a soul aboard of her except the monkeys, and that they were half dead of thirst. There were a couple of full water-casks on deck, beside one that was empty. When the monkeys saw that I was going to knock the bung out of a cask they went wild with joy, and even the old white-haired chap condescended to follow me, though he didn't chatter, and didn't show any especial interest in having the cask broached. You should have seen those monkeys go for that water! The poor beasts must have been for days without a drop, and not one of them had sense enough to knock a bung out, though they knew the casks were full of water. There were provisions enough aboard the schooner, for I had seen a bread barge more than half full of good pilot bread in the cabin, and I knew that there must be plenty more where that came from.

"'I'm thinking, sir,' said one of the men to me, 'that thishyer'll be a salvage case.'

"'Right you are,' said I—'that is, if the captain takes that view of it. We'll go back to the brig and report now, and if so be that he wants this schooner to be carried into Ryo, there won't be much difficulty about doing it.' You see the man—'Liverpool Dick' was his name—had been in two or three ships with me, and was as good a man as they make. So I could talk a little freer with him than a second mate can generally talk with the men.

"When I told old Bill Simmons that the schooner was deserted except for monkeys, and that she was in first-rate condition, provided he wanted to carry her into port, he said that if I wanted to take six hands and navigate her into Ryo I could do so.

"'Enough said,' said I. 'I'll get my sextant and dunnage and be aboard the schooner before a breeze comes up. I suppose you won't mind letting me have Liverpool Dick? He'll make a good enough mate for me.'

"'Certainly,' says Old Bill. 'You'll probably beat us into Ryo, and we'll pick

you up there. However, you'll have just to shove the schooner along, for if we do get there first I can't wait for you, and I'll have to ship another second mate and half a dozen men. You know what owners are, yourself They can take a moderate-sized lie alongside sometimes, but it's a mighty hard job to get 'em to histe it in.'

"It didn't take me very long to get back aboard the schooner. I had Liverpool Dick with me, and three middling good men, and three Rameeks that Old Bill was glad to get rid of We all turned to and cleaned the decks up, and the breeze gradually freshening from the eastward, we slipped on our course and by night we had clean dropped the *Jane G. Mather*. Dick and I chose watches. I gave him three men, and I took two, and the odd man was put in the caboose and told to cook, though he swore he had never cooked so much as an egg since he was born. We managed to get some sort of a supper about six o'clock, and the first watch on deck falling to Dick, I turned in feeling pretty comfortable.

The monkeys all came aft at eight bells."

"The monkeys hadn't said a word since we took charge of her They saw what we meant as soon as we came on board, and they turned out of the fokesell and left it to the men of their own accord, which showed that they knew the difference between sailors and monkeys. The old white-haired chap that was in command of them bunked by himself in the lee of the caboose, and the rest of them curled up under the weather rail about amidships, and were as quiet as you could wish They all came aft at eight bells, so the mate told me, as much as to say that they were waiting for orders; but, getting none, they went to sleep again by the time I came on deck

"The next day, the breeze holding fair, and there being nothing to do except to let her go along comfortable, I overhauled the whole schooner, searching for her papers, and not finding them. Dick and I talked about it, and I made up my mind that she had been carrying a cargo of monkeys—for she had little else in her except ballast—and that her people had got panic-struck about something and had deserted her. I found one or two curious things, though. She had a big rifled

gun lying down on the ballast, and about fifty breech-loading rifles stowed away here and there, where nobody would be likely to see them. Then she had two boats, and it didn't seem likely that a schooner of her size would carry more than two. If so, how did her people get away from her without a boat? I couldn't understand it, and no more could Dick.

"The monkeys behaved well for the first two days. They were always on hand for their grub, which we served out to them regular; and they never grumbled—at least, not so far as we could understand. The old monkey captain would now and then come and walk the quarter-deck with me, never venturing any remarks, but just meaning, as I supposed, to show that there was no hard feeling. But the third day, Dick comes to me, and says, 'It's my opinion, sir, that there's mischief brewing among them chaps.'

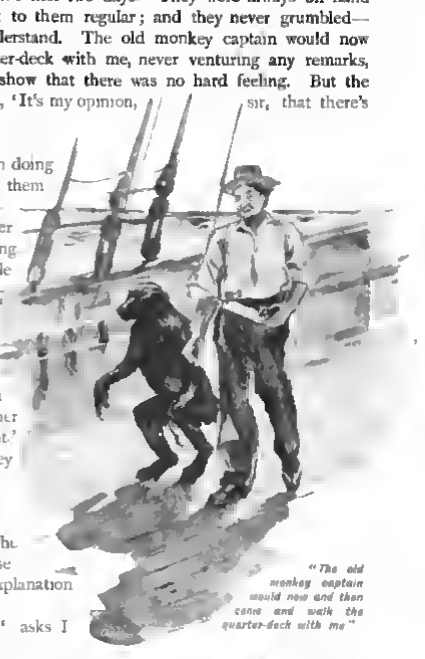
"'Why so?' says I.

"'Well,' says he, 'they have been doing a lot of talking on the quiet among themselves, and the old man's got something on his mind, for he's altogether too bloomin' sweet tempered this morning. He's laid into two or three of his people with a rope's end, and then he's been walking the deck with me, and bowing and grinning as much as to say that he considers me as much his superior as if I was a post-captain in the royal navy. I advise you to keep a bright look out and keep your weather eye liftin' while you're on deck to-night.'

"'Why, what do you suppose they mean to do?' I asked.

"'What are they here for? Tell me that,' says Dick. 'This schooner wasn't never deserted by no crew. She sailed out of port with nobody but these 'ere monkeys aboard. That's my explanation of the thing.'

"'Where were they bound to?' asks I. 'And what did they go to sea for?'



"The old monkey captain would now and then come and walk the quarter-deck with me."

"'They were going a-piratin', that's what they were doing,' says Dick. 'That's why she ain't got no name; that's why there ain't no papers of no kind aboard her; that's why she's in ballast; that's why she's got that big gun aboard, and all them rifles; that's why she's so strong handed. Why, what do you think the old man dropped last night while he was a-calking in the lee of the caboose? He dropped thishyer knife, sir, and when a monkey takes to carrying a knife like that he means business, and you can just lay your last mag on that.'

"It was a long clasp-knife, with a sharp blade, made for stabbing and for nothing else. I didn't like the look of the thing, but I told Dick that his notion about the schooner having sailed with nobody aboard her but monkeys was rubbish. 'You saw for yourself,' said I, 'that they couldn't sail the schooner.'

"'I saw that they didn't want to sail her for some reason or other,' says he. 'As to their not being able for to sail her, I have my doubts. Early this morning the man

on the look-out went to sleep, and one of those monkeys, maybe the old man himself, went forrard and trimmed in the head sheets. The wind had hauled round till, as you see now, it is pretty near abeam of us.'

"'If they know that much, said I, 'we'll turn 'em all to, and make 'em do the rest of the work this voyage.'

"'Well, you'll see, sir,' said Dick, 'there's something in the wind, and we'll know what it is before long. I'm going to speak pretty plain to the old man—that is, if you don't have no objection.'

"'None in the world,' says I. 'You might ask him where his papers are, and perhaps he'll tell you.'

"The next day Dick told me that he had had a long conversation with the monkey captain, and told him that we had our suspicions of him.

"'It stands to reason,' said Dick to the monkey captain, 'that you don't like having the command took away from you; but it was done for your own good. You're a passenger now, and all you've got to do is to conduct yourself as such. There's been altogether too much chin going on among the lot of you lately, and you'd better put a stopper on it just where you are. You needn't hope to catch us napping, and if you try any mutinous games you're bound to get the worst of it. Do you savvy that now?'

"The monkey grinned and bowed, swearing, as you might say, that he never had no intentions of no kind; and then he went forrard and took it out in cussin' his own people, as was quite right and natural.

"That very night, some time in the middle watch, I woke up, being in my bunk, and, being a very light sleeper, I heard somebody moving in the cabin; and thinking that one of the men might be trying to steal one of my rum bottles—for there was a dozen of heavenly rum in the pantry—I slipped out and had a look. The lamp was burning, and there was the monkey captain stealing out of the cabin with a big chart, that I had marked her position on, under his arm. I sung out to him, and he dropped the chart, and took to smiling and ducking as respectful as you please.

"'I won't have none of this,' I said to him. 'You go forrard where you belong, and the next time I catch you here into irons you go.'

"He didn't say anything, but he looked pretty mad, and slunk away without doing any more bowing.

"I told Dick about the affair when I relieved him at eight bells, and asked him what he made of it.

"'It's plain enough,' said he. 'Those fellows mean to seize thishyer schooner, and the old man wanted to know just what our position is. Have you got a pistol with you, sir?'

"I told him I hadn't.

"'Then,' said he, 'my advice is that you load half a dozen of them rifles, and keep 'em where we can lay our hands to 'em if they're wanted. Those chaps mean bloody mutiny, and they'll begin before very long.'

"I didn't much like the look of the thing myself. What did that monkey want with the chart? I told myself that, being a natural thief like all his sort, he just stole the first thing that came to hand when he got into the cabin; but why did he steal a chart when there was a bottle of rum standing in the rack on the table, with the cork already drawn?

"When a monkey carries a big, bloody-minded knife, and comes into the cabin at night to steal a chart, there is something wrong, and I began to be half of Dick's opinion that there was a mutiny brewing.

"However, the next twenty-four hours the monkeys were as quiet as could be. The monkey captain was full of his smirks and bows, and didn't seem to remember anything about his having been caught in the cabin the night before. He brought me and Dick a box of cigars that he had found somewhere—and good cigars they were too!—and his general idea seemed to be to make us believe that he was our best friend, and was ready to do anything to please us. The other monkeys kept watching him, and when they caught me or Dick or any of the men looking at them they'd grin as affable as a boarding house keeper that comes down aboard an incoming ship a-looking for boarders.

"Another queer thing happened that morning. When we hove the log, the monkey captain came aft and watched us, and tailed on to the log line to help haul it in, as though he was anxious for a chance to show his good will.

"'He's got our position yesterday from the chart,' says Dick, 'and now he's going to depend on dead reckoning till he can get another chance at the chart. I wish I knew as much about navigation as he does. I'd get a second mate's certificate and get out of the fokesell the next time I get to London.'

"Now it did seem impossible that a monkey should know navigation, but it did look as if this particular monkey knew what charts and log lines are for. The man at the wheel told me that he'd seen the monkey looking into the binnacle to see what course she was steering more than half a dozen times, and it was the opinion among the men that he was the devil himself. However, nobody could help noticing that when the monkey captain's back was turned the rest of the monkeys kept up a low conversation among themselves, and it was easy to see that they had something on their minds.

"'I'd give a good deal to understand the lingo of them chaps,' says Dick to me. 'It's my belief that they know they're nearing the Brazil coast, and that they mean to take possession of the schooner by the time we sight land. I wish I had a pistol with me, though I don't doubt they're intelligent enough to understand what a belaying pin says when it hits 'em over the head.'

"We were about two days' sail from Ryo, according to my calculation—that is, of course, if the wind held—and I was coming round to Dick's opinion that the monkeys had some sort of traverse that they calculated to work, though I couldn't chime in with his notion that they had fitted out the schooner and meant to go on a piratical cruise. After thinking the thing over more than a hundred times I came to the conclusion that the schooner had been to the west coast of Africa for slaves. That was why she was in ballast, and why there wasn't any name on her stern, nor any papers of any sort to be found aboard of her. I said so to Dick, but he wouldn't agree with me.

"'That's all very well so far as it goes,' says he, 'but it don't account for her being manned by nobody except monkeys. How did they get possession of her? That's what I'd like you to tell me.'

"'Suppose she was lying in the river, waiting to take her cargo of slaves aboard, and suppose all hands got blazing drunk, and suppose the shippers sent aboard a cargo of monkeys instead of niggers. How does that strike you?' said I.

"'What's become of the crew?' asked Dick.

"'Why, when they got sober and saw the monkeys they thought they had the horrors, and they all tumbled ashore to get more rum, or perhaps to get a little quiet sleep in the barracoon.'

"'And the monkeys, seeing their chance, got up the anchor and made sail on her and carried her clean across the Atlantic! Seems to me, sir, that your story is about as tough as mine, and has got too many twists and turns in it. No, sir, I stick to my first opinion. This schooner was fitted out by monkeys, and no men never had

anything to do with her, except perhaps to build her. Well, I'll go below now, and if you should want me on deck in a hurry just knock on the deck over my bunk. I shall turn in all standing, and I'll answer your call about as quick as you can make it.'

"I had no occasion to sing out for the mate during that watch, for the monkeys were as quiet as lambs, and slept all curled up together, every man Jack of them taking a turn with his tail around the neck of the next one. It was an unseamanlike way of proceeding, for if there had been a sudden call of 'All hands!' it would have taken those monkeys ten minutes to cast themselves loose. But I suppose they got their ideas of seamanship from the Brazilians, and what could you expect of them?

"The next day was Wednesday. I remember it because it's my lucky day, though at one time it didn't look as if there was much luck about the day on that particular occasion. I noticed that every now and then one of the monkeys would lay aloft, for all the world as if he was looking out for land; and if you'll believe it, sir, one of them

The monkeys slept every man Jack of them taking a turn with his tail round his neighbour's neck"

finally saw land, and reported it to the monkey captain before any one of us white men saw it. I saw the fellow come down from the cross-trees and go up to the old man and say something, and then, after getting his orders, he went and told the rest of his people, and every one them went forrard and began looking for the land, and chattering as if they were amazing glad that the voyage was most over.

"The wind dropped about noon, and we were pretty near becalmed for the next twenty four hours. I was getting anxious for fear that the *Jane G. Mather* would reach Ryo before we did, in which case, as the captain had said, he wouldn't be able to wait for us, and I would lose a mighty good berth as second mate. At twelve o'clock I turned in, telling Dick to knock on the deck in case he should want me; and, remembering what he had said the night before about turning in all standing, I thought I would do the same, not knowing but what the calm might be followed, as it often is in those latitudes, by a sudden squall that might be more than the schooner wanted.

"I was sound asleep, and dreaming that I had come into a big fortune and had bought a big farm, stocked with elephants and codfish, somewhere down in Devon, and was going to raise cigars ready made, when Dick hammered on the deck with his boot heel, and woke me in a hurry. There was a tremendous row going on over my head, and my first idea was that we were going to be run down by one of

"I got to work and put a bullet through the monkey captain."

those big French liners that are for ever running into other people along the South American coast; but before I could get on deck I heard Dick cursing and the monkeys snarling, and knew that he was having a fight with them. So I caught up a couple of rifles, which was about all I could carry, and was on deck inside of five seconds. The first thing I saw was that there was nobody at the wheel, and that Dick was backed up against the weather-rail and fighting with all hands of the monkeys. They were jumping on him with their naked hands and feet, and trying to tear him limb from limb, and he was laying into them with a belaying pin as if he was mate of an old-time Black Ball packet breaking in a crew of packet rats. So far as I could judge the fight was a pretty equal thing, and Dick was keeping his end pretty well up. He had laid out half a dozen of the monkeys, but for all that they were full of pluck, and their captain, who kept a little on the outskirts of the shindy, kept encouraging them, and keeping them up to their work.

"I didn't wait many seconds before I got to work. I put a bullet through the monkey captain first of all. Then I fired promiscuous like into the middle of the muss; and then, using the rifle as a handspike, I let them see that I didn't intend to allow no nonsense aboard of my schooner. They didn't stop to argue. Some of them went overboard; some went aloft; some laid out on the jib-boom, and the rest tried to hide wherever they could. In less than a minute the decks were cleared, and things were quiet again.

"It seems that the monkeys had made a sudden attack on Dick when he was least expecting them, and for a little it looked as if he might lose the number of his mess.

"'You see, sir,' he said, 'it's just as I told you. Them devils has tried to seize the schooner; and I will say this for 'em, that they did it in a way that showed a good deal of savey.'

"'Are you hurt?' I asked, for I could see that there was blood on his face.

"'Only a bite or two, and a few scratches. Nothing of any account,' he replied. 'You see, they didn't have any arms. If they'd had knives like the one the old man dropped, it would have been all day with me. They'd have cut me into fine slices before you could have got on deck.'

"'Where are all the men?' I asked. 'Where's the man at the wheel?'

"'He's gone overboard, sir,' said Dick, 'with his throat tore open. One watch of them monkeys attended to him while the other watch was trying to do the same for me. The rest of the men is hiding in the fokesell, according to my idea, and I'll just take a handspike and go and have a talk with 'em.'

"I went along with him, and we found that the hatch had been clapped on and made fast, so that not a man in the fokesell could get on deck. All the men were below, including the man who had been on the look-out, and who had jumped down to rouse the rest of the men when he saw what the monkeys were up to. The men were mighty glad to be released, for there wasn't any air coming into the fokesell except when the hatch was off, and the night was a middling hot one. In about an hour more they would all have been suffocated, which is probably what the monkeys were expecting.

"Of course it was all hands on deck for the rest of that night, for we didn't know what new game the monkeys might try, but we heard nothing of them until daylight. About eight bells in the morning watch we got a slant from the eastward, and before noon we were in the harbour of Ryo.

"The monkeys kept out of sight, so far as they could, until we were close in with the shore, when they all went overboard; and when they reached the land they bolted for the woods. Dick was not in favour of letting them go, but said they ought to be

put in irons and tried for mutiny and murder, but I told him that it would save a lot of trouble for us to be well rid of them before handing the schooner over to the consul. I called the men aft, and told them that the least said about the monkeys the sooner we'd get our salvage money; and they all swore they wouldn't say a blessed word about it. No more they did. We told the consul that we picked up the schooner derelict, without a soul aboard of her; and he took our depositions, and did the usual thing in such cases, which, as you know without being told, was to keep us waiting for our money for the best part of a year, and then pay us about a tenth of what we ought to have had, saying that the rest had been used up for expenses. Oh! I don't blame him. It wasn't his fault; but that's what always happens when one of these 'ere Admiralty courts gets its lines made fast to a salvage case.

"Nobody ever found out who that schooner belonged to, or where she had sailed from, or what her name was, or anything about her.

"What is your opinion, sir? I've given you the straight facts. There was a schooner manned by monkeys, and nobody else. How did it happen? That's what I never found out, and what nobody ever will find out, in my opinion. I don't expect you to believe one yarn, though it's gospel truth. I never found but one man who believed it, and it turned out that he was a lunatic at the time, though he was generally supposed to be only what they call a philosopher."

W. L. Alden.

A New Explosive.

THE French Minister of War sat in his very comfortable chair in his own private yet official room, and pondered over a letter he had received. Being Minister of War, he was naturally the most mild, the most humane, and least quarrelsome man in the Cabinet. A Minister of War receives many letters that, as a matter of course, he throws into his waste basket, but this particular communication had somehow managed to rivet his attention. When a man becomes Minister of War he learns for the first time that apparently the great majority of mankind are engaged in the manufacture or invention of rifles, gunpowders, and devices of all kinds for the destruction of the rest of the world.

That morning, the Minister of War had received a letter which announced to him that the writer of it had invented an explosive so terrible that all known destructive agencies paled before it. As a Frenchman, he made the first offer of his discovery to the French Government. It would cost the Minister nothing, he said, to make a test which would corroborate his amazing claims for the substance, and the moment that test was made any intelligent man would recognise the fact that the power which possessed the secret of this destructive compound would at once occupy an unassailable position in a contentious world.

The writer offered personally to convince the Minister of the truth of his assertions, provided they could go to some remote spot where the results of the explosion would do no damage, and where they would be safe from espionage. The writer went on very frankly to say that if the Minister consulted with the agents of the police, they would at once see in this invitation a trap for the probable assassination of the Minister. But the inventor claimed that the Minister's own good sense should show him that his death was desired by none. He was but newly appointed, and had not yet had time to make enemies. France was at peace with all the world, and this happened before the time of the Anarchist demonstrations in Paris. It was but right, the letter went on, that the Minister should have some guarantee as to the *bona fides* of the inventor. He therefore gave his name and address, and said that if the Minister made inquiries from the police he would find nothing stood in their books against him. He was a student, whose attention for years had been given to the subject of explosives. To further show that he was entirely unselfish in this matter, he added that he had no desire to enrich himself by his discovery. He had a private income quite sufficient for his needs, and he intended to give, and not to sell, his secret to France. The only proviso he made was that his name should be linked with this terrible compound, which he maintained would secure universal peace to the world, for, after its qualities were known, no nation would dare to fight with another. The sole ambition of the inventor, said the letter in

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conclusion, was to place his name high in the list of celebrated French scientists If, however, the Minister refused to treat with him he would go to other Governments until his invention was taken up, but the Government which secured it would at once occupy the lead among nations He entreated the Minister, therefore, for the sake of his country, to make at least one test of the compound

It was, as I have said, before the time of the Paris explosion, and Ministers were not as suspicious as they are now. The Minister made inquiries regarding the scientist, who lived in a little suburb of Paris, and found that there was nothing against him on the books of the police. Inquiry showed that all he had said about his own private fortune was true. The Minister therefore wrote to the inventor, and named an hour at which he would receive him in his private office

"The hour and the man arrived together."

The hour and the man arrived together. The Minister had had some slight doubts regarding his sanity, but the letter had been so straightforwardly written, and the appearance of the man himself was so kindly and benevolent and intelligent that the doubts of the official vanished.

"I beg you to be seated," said the Minister. "We are entirely alone, and nothing you say will be heard by any one but myself."

"I thank you, Monsieur le Ministre," replied the inventor, "for this mark of confidence, for I am afraid the claims I made in the letter were so extraordinary that you might well have hesitated about granting me an interview."

The Minister smiled. "I understand," he said, "the enthusiasm of an inventor for his latest triumph, and I was enabled thus to take, as it were, some discount from your statements, although I doubt not that you have discovered something that may be of benefit to the War Department."

The inventor hesitated, looking seriously at the great official before him

"From what you say," he began at last, "I am rather afraid to tell you, my discovery is so extraordinary that in my letter I was obliged to make my claims so mild that I fear I erred in under-estimating rather than in over-stating them. I have the explosive here in my pocket."

"Ah!" cried the Minister, a shade of pallor coming over his countenance, as he pushed back his chair. "I thought I stated in my note that you were not to bring it."

"Forgive me for not obeying. It is perfectly harmless while in this state. That is one of the peculiarities—a beneficent peculiarity if I may so term it—of this terrible

agent It may be handled with perfect safety, and yet its effects are as inevitable as death," saying which, he took out of his pocket and held up to the light a bottle filled with a clear colourless liquid like water.

"You could pour that on the fire," he said, "with no other effect than to put out the blaze. You might place it under a steam hammer and crush the bottle to powder, yet no explosion would follow. It is as harmless as water in its present condition."

"How, then," said the Minister, "do you deal with it?"

Again the man hesitated.

"I am almost afraid to tell you," he said, "and if I could not demonstrate to your entire satisfaction that what I say is true, it would be folly for me to say what I am about to say. If I were to take this bottle and cut a notch in the cork, and walk with it neck downwards along the Boulevard des Italiens, allowing this fluid to fall drop by drop on the pavement, I could walk in that way in safety through every street in Paris. If it rained that day nothing would happen. If it rained the next or for a week nothing would happen, but the moment the sun came out and dried the moisture, the light step of a cat on any pavement over which I had passed would instantly shatter to ruins the whole of Paris."

"Impossible!" cried the Minister, an expression of horror coming into his face.

"I knew you would say that. Therefore I ask you to come with me to the country, where I can prove the truth of what I say. While I carry this bottle around with me in this apparently careless fashion, it is corked, as you see, with the utmost security. Not a drop of the fluid must be left on the outside of the cork or of the bottle. I have wiped the bottle and cork most thoroughly, and burned the cloth which I used in doing so. Fire will not cause this compound even when dry to explode, but the slightest touch will set it off. I have to be extremely careful in its manufacture, so that not a single drop is left unaccounted for in any place where it might evaporate."

The Minister, with his finger tips together and his eyes on the ceiling, mused for a few moments on the amazing statement he had heard.

"If what you say is true," he began at last, "don't you think it would be more humane to destroy all traces of the experiments by which you discovered this substance, and to divulge the secret to no one? The devastation such a thing would cause if it fell into unscrupulous hands is too appalling even to contemplate."

"I have thought of that," said the inventor; "but some one else—the time may be far off or it may be near—is bound to make the discovery. My whole ambition, as I told you in my letter, is to have my name coupled with this discovery. I wish it to be known as the Lambelle Explosive. The secret would be safe with the French Government."

"I am not so sure of that," returned the Minister. "Some unscrupulous man may become Minister of War, and may use his knowledge to put himself in the position of Dictator. An unscrupulous man in the possession of such a secret would be invincible."

"What you say," replied the inventor, "is undoubtedly true; yet I am determined that the name of Lambelle shall go down in history coupled with the most destructive agent the world has ever known, or will know. If the Government of France will build for me a large stone structure as secure as a fortress, I will keep my secret, but will fill that building with bottles like this, and then——"

Lambelle was waiting for him, holding by a leash two sorry-looking dogs."

"I do not see," said the Minister, "that that would lessen the danger, if the unscrupulous man I speak of once became possessed of the keys; and, besides, the mere fact that such a secret existed would put other inventors upon the track, and some one else less benevolent than yourself would undoubtedly make the discovery. You admitted a moment ago that the chances were a future investigator would succeed in getting the right ingredients together, even without the knowledge that such an explosive existed. See what an incentive it would be to inventors all over the world, if it were known that France had in its possession such a fearful explosive! No Government has ever yet been successful in keeping the secret of either a gun or a gunpowder."

"There is, of course," said Lambelle, "much in what you say; but, equally of course, all that you say might have been said to the inventor of gunpowder, for gunpowder in its day was as wonderful as this is now."

Suddenly the Minister laughed aloud.

"I am talking seriously with you on this subject," he exclaimed, "as if I really believed in it. Of course, I may say I do nothing of the kind. I think you must have hypnotised me with those calm eyes of yours into crediting your statements for even a few moments."

"All that I say," said the inventor quietly, "can be corroborated to-morrow. Make an appointment with me in the country, and if it chances to be a calm and sunny day you will no longer doubt the evidence of your own eyes."

"Where do you wish the experiment to be made?" asked the Minister.

"It must be in some wild and desolate region, on a hill-top for preference. There should be either trees or old buildings there that we can destroy, otherwise the full effects can hardly be estimated."

"I have a place in the country," said the Minister, "which is wild and desolate and unprofitable enough. There are some useless stone buildings, not on a hill-top, but by the edge of a quarry which has been unworked for many years. There is no habitation for several miles around. Would such a spot be suitable?"

"Perfectly so. When would it be convenient for you to go?"

"I will leave with you to-night," said the Minister, "and we can spend the day to-morrow experimenting."

"Very well," answered Lambelle, rising when the Minister had told him the hour and the railway station at which they should meet.

That evening, when the Minister drove to the railway station in time for his train, he found Lambelle waiting for him, holding, by a leash, two sorry-looking dogs.

"Do you travel with such animals as these?" asked the Minister.

"The poor brutes," said Lambelle, with sorrow in his voice, "are necessary for our experiments. They will be in atoms by this time to-morrow."

The dogs were put into the railway-van, and the inventor brought his portmanteau with him into the private carriage reserved for the use of the Minister.

The place, as the Minister of War had said, was desolate enough. The stone buildings near the edge of the deserted quarry were stout and strong, although partly in ruins.

"I have here with me in my portmanteau," said Lambelle, "some hundreds of metres of electric wire. I will attach one of the dogs by this clip, which we can release from a distance by pressing an electric button. The moment the dog escapes he will undoubtedly explode the compound."

The insulated wire was run along the ground to a distant elevation The dog was attached by the electric clip, and chained to a doorpost of one of the buildings. Lambelle then carefully uncorked his bottle, holding it at arms' length from his person. The Minister watched with strange interest as Lambelle allowed the fluid to drip in a semicircular line around the chained dog The inventor carefully re-corked the bottle, wiped it thoroughly with a cloth he had with him, and threw the cloth into one of the deserted houses.

They waited near, until the spots caused by the fluid on the stone pavement in front of the house had disappeared.

"By the time we reach the hill," said Lambelle, "it will be quite dry in this hot sun."

As they departed towards the elevation, the forlorn dog howled mournfully, as if in premonition of his fate

"'Will you press the electric lever?' said Lambelle."

"I think, to make sure," said the inventor, when they reached the electrical apparatus, "that we might wait for half an hour"

The Minister lit a cigarette, and smoked silently, a strange battle going on in his mind. He found himself believing in the extraordinary claims made by the inventor, and his mind dwelt on the awful possibilities of such an explosive

"Will you press the electric lever?" asked Lambelle quietly "Remember that you are inaugurating a new era."

The Minister pressed down the key; and then, putting his field-glass to his eye, he saw that the dog was released, but the animal sat there scratching its ear with its paw. Then, realising that it was loose, it sniffed for a moment at the chain. Finally, it threw up its head and barked, although the distance was too great for them to hear any sound The dog started in the direction the two men had gone, but, before it had taken three steps, the Minister was appalled to see the buildings suddenly crumble into dust, and a few moments later the thunder of the rocks falling into the deserted quarry came towards them The whole ledge had been flung forward into the chasm. There was no smoke, but a haze of dust hovered over the spot.

"My God!" cried the Minister. "That is awful!"

"Yes," said Lambelle quietly; "I put more of the substance on the flagging than I need to have done. A few drops would have answered quite as well, but I wanted to make sure. You were very sceptical, you know."

The Minister looked at him. "I beg of you, M Lambelle, never to divulge this secret to the Government of France, or to any other power Take the risk of it being discovered in the future I implore you to reconsider your original intention If you desire money, I will see that you get what you want from the secret funds."

Lambelle shrugged his shoulders.

"I have no desire for money,' he said, "but what you have seen will show you that I shall be the most famous scientist of the century The name of Lambelle will be known till the end of the world"

"But, my God, man!" said the Minister, "the end of the world is here the moment your secret is in the possession of another With you or me it would be safe, but who can tell the minds of those who may follow us? You are putting the power of the Almighty into the hands of a man"

Lambelle flushed with pride as the pale faced Minister said this

"You speak the truth!" he cried. "It is the power of Omnipotence"

"My God! cried the Minister 'That is awful!'"

"Then," implored the Minister, "reconsider your decision"

"I have laboured too long," said Lambelle, "to forgo my triumph now You are convinced at last, I see. Now then, tell me, will you,

as Minister of France, secure for your country this greatest of all inventions?"

"Yes," answered the Minister, "no other power must be allowed to obtain the secret. Have you ever written down the names of the ingredients?"

"Never," answered Lambelle.

"Is it not possible for any one to have suspected what your experiments were? If a man got into your laboratory—a scientific man—could he not, from what he saw there, obtain the secret?"

"It would be impossible," said Lambelle. "I have been too anxious to keep the credit for myself, to leave any traces that might give a hint of what I was doing—if, for instance, I became ill."

"You were wise in that," said the Minister, drawing a deep breath. "Now let us go and look at the ruins."

As they neared the spot, the official's astonishment at the extraordinary destruction became greater and greater. The rock had been rent as if by an earthquake, to the distance of hundreds of yards.

"You say," said the Minister, "that the liquid is perfectly safe until evaporation takes place."

"Perfectly," answered Lambelle. "Of course one has to be careful, as I told you, in the use of it. You must not get a drop on your clothes, or leave it anywhere on the outside of the bottle to evaporate."

"Let me see the stuff."

Lambelle handed him the bottle.

"Have you any more of this in your laboratory?"

"Not a drop."

"If you wished to destroy this, how would you do it?"

"I should empty the bottle into the Seine. It would flow down to the sea, and no harm would be done."

"See if you can find any traces of the dog," said the Minister. "I will clamber down into the quarry, and look there."

"You will find nothing," said Lambelle confidently.

There was but one path by which the bottom of the quarry could be reached. The Minister descended by this until he was out of sight of the man above, then he quickly uncorked the bottle, and allowed the fluid to drip along the narrowest part of the path which faced the burning sun. He corked the bottle, wiped it carefully with his handkerchief, which he rolled into a ball, and threw into the quarry. Coming up to the surface again, he said to the mild and benevolent scientist: "I cannot find a trace of the dog."

"Nor can I," said Lambelle. "Of course when you can hardly find a sign of the buildings it is not to be expected that there should be any remnants of the dog."

"Suppose we get back to the hill now and have lunch," said the Minister.

"Do you wish to try another experiment?"

"I would like to try one more after we have had something to eat. What would be the effect if you poured the whole bottleful into the quarry and set it off?"

"Oh, impossible!" cried Lambelle. "It would rend this whole part of the country to pieces. In fact, I am not sure that the shock would not be felt as far as Paris. With a very few drops I will shatter the whole quarry."

"Well, we will try that after lunch. We have another dog left."

"I could not do otherwise," he murmured"

When an hour had passed, Lambelle was anxious to try his quarry experiment.

"By-and-by," he said, "the sun will not be shining in the quarry, and then it will be too late."

"We can easily wait until to-morrow, unless you are in a hurry."

"I am in no hurry," rejoined the inventor. "I thought perhaps you might be, with so much to do."

"No," replied the official. "Nothing I shall do during my administration will be more important than this."

"I am glad to hear you say so," answered Lambelle; "and if you will give me the bottle again I will now place a few drops in the sunny part of the quarry."

The Minister handed him the bottle, apparently with some reluctance.

"I still think," he said, "that it would be better to allow this secret to die. No one knows of it except you yourself. With you, as I have said, it will die, and you with me; but think of the awful possibilities of this terrible

"Every great invention has its risks," said Lambelle firmly. "Nothing would induce me to forgo the fruits of my life-work. It is too much to ask of any man."

"Very well," said the Minister. "Then let us be sure of our facts. I want to see the effects of the explosive on the quarry."

"You shall," said Lambelle, as he departed.

"I will wait for you here," said the Minister, "and smoke a cigarette."

When the inventor approached the quarry, leading the dog behind him, the Minister's hand trembled so that he was hardly able to hold the field-glass to his eye. Lambelle disappeared down the path. The next instant the ground trembled even where the Minister sat, and a haze of dust arose above the ruined quarry.

Some moments after the pallid Minister looked over the work of destruction, but no trace of humanity was there except himself.

"I could not do otherwise," he murmured. "It was too great a risk to run."

ROBERT BAER

The Ghosts of Austerlitz.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

ON the 25th day of December, in the year of grace 1890, Captain Blythe, formerly of the 10th Rifles, sat in his cosy bachelor rooms in Piccadilly, luxuriously idling away the afternoon, partly in reverie of things past, partly in the perusal of that volume of Thiers' fascinating history of the campaigns of the great Napoleon which bears the suggestive title "Austerlitz." He had pictured the armies confronting one another, the sunrise over the misty snow-fields, the storming of the heights of Pratzen, diluting the martial story, once or twice, with milder reminiscences of his own campaignings in the Crimea and in Zululand, and had finally checked the French pursuit of the Allies for a comfortable anticipation of the turkey and champagne to come by-and-by. And thinking of the Christmas dinners that would that day be eaten in London, he asked himself who should speak so eloquently of the things that grace the season and link themselves with the memory of bygone Christmas days—the bright lights and happy voices, the full stockings and trinket-laden trees, the sleek congregations, the smoking joints and rare old fruity vintages—as that starving poet whom, after twenty years, he had met at the church door, and whom he had bidden to dine that evening. Fine material that, he mused, with a glance at the holly wreath hanging in the window, to kindle a poet's fancy with cheerful suggestions of this frosty season placed midway between the decline of autumn and that flowery spring with whose promise one seeks to wreathe the future. And settling himself at ease before the fire, he thought of his schoolmates trooping, fifty years ago, across the hayfields, of the honours he took at sixteen, of that ill-fated courtship at twenty—oh, shame upon thee, faithless Arabella!—of his poverty-stricken battle with the world, of journeyings and camp scenes in far countries, of that assegai thrust at Ulundi, and of the murderous look on the face of that Zulu as he fell shot through the head. The Captain was a sentimental man, despite all the hard knocks of life, and was wont to comfort himself with the reflection that every momentous experience adds a string to the lute, from the high note of success to the bass of sorrow, so that the accords of our nature should grow fuller and richer, if softer, with time. It was pleasanter to remember Arabella, years ago, as the slip of a girl she

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was, the night of that midsummer moonlight walk, than as the stately matron she had grown, surrounded by her rich and obedient husband, and her half-dozen more or less unruly offspring

The clock struck four, and lights were brought. In the next house a German *Fraulein* was lustily singing "Der Erlkonig," and Captain Blythe could faintly distinguish the weird, sweet ballad of the knightly and romantic Rhine, of the haunted

ride amid storm and darkness, of the irresistibly persuasive goblin and his fairy daughters,—yet as the words "Erlkonig hat mir ein Leid gethan!" rippled away, he stirred the fire and pooh-poohed the song, and growled that none but a German would have dreamt such nonsense as this of a boy, lured to death in the land of spirits, through his own imagination, while bodily clasped in his father's arms. He walked to the window and peered through the wintry twilight upon the noiseless passers. The contrast which a bleak evening and flickering gas lamps and such indistinct forms presented to his blazing fireside usually offered a comforting suggestion, but on this particular day the figures flitted hither and thither with more serious meaning. Some were, perhaps, returning to cheerless homes; a few to carry the burden of a secret sorrow into the midst of the care-free; this or that one to watch this Christmas night beside a bed of illness. Bah! little concern it was of his whither they went, or what their errands. He resumed his book and finished the tragic story of the carnage and rout of the Russian and Austrian troops, until, in the quiet of that long afternoon, his eyes closed for the forty winks an elderly gentleman may allow himself before dinner.

He had been asleep but a moment when, in the first impression of what rapidly became a vivid dream, a cold hand closed roughly upon his wrist, and to his bewilderment he found himself in the grasp of a Cossack soldier, one of the very horsemen about whom he had been reading. And it seemed to him that they walked by night across the snow fields of Austerlitz, passing between great frosted poplars, with glimmering camp-fires in the distance and the stars shining in transcendent splendour overhead.

"Where are you taking me?" he gasped, in such scanty Russian as he had picked up at Sebastopol.

"To the Czar," was the curt answer: "he has need of you."

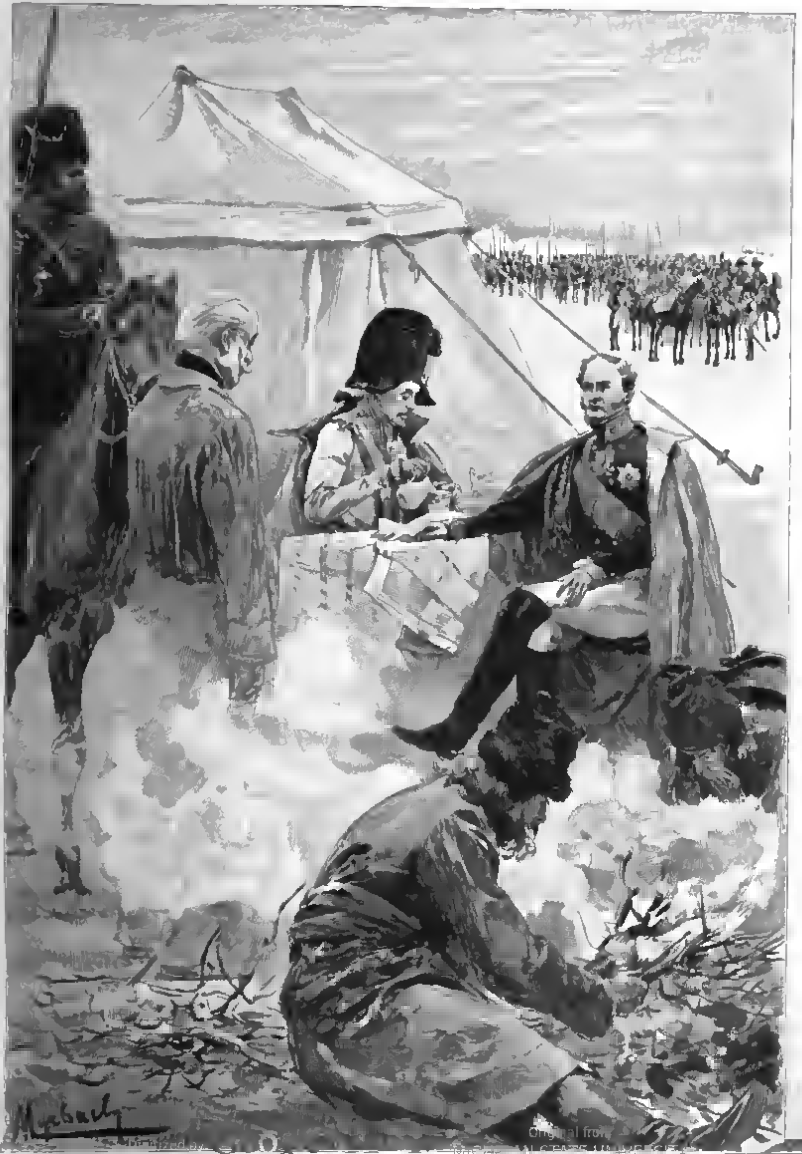
"To the Czar!—in dressing-gown and slippers!"

"His Majesty is too busy to notice."

"But I shall freeze to death!"

To this objection the Russian vouchsafed only a muttered word that resembled the snarl of a dog not to be trifled with. And looking more closely at his companion, Captain Blythe was startled to discover that it was Arabella's husband disguised as a Cossack, but with an eyeglass in the right eye, and one hand chinking the sovereigns in his trousers pocket, as in life. They walked, as it seemed, for an hour, coming frequently upon vedettes and other tokens of the presence of a vast army. Once they nearly stumbled over the body of a dead Russian soldier, with a bullet through his brain, just where the Captain had shot the Zulu, and bearing, in the darkness, an astonishing resemblance to the black and distorted features of that ill-favoured savage. Farther on they passed a village church which would be fired and stormed on the following morning, and whose graveyard would be strewn with Austrian dead. But now, in the silent and luminous starlight, and beneath the solemn, snow-flecked trees, the headstones and crosses stood out like the sails of a fleet of phantom galleys frozen to a motionless repose.

A distant noise behind them caught the ear, and he and his guide instinctively turned to listen. It was the tumultuous shouting of many voices, a mile away, and with the faint sound, as it moved from one side of the French camp to the other, went a sparkle of torches. Captain Blythe knew that it was the frenzied acclamation of the French soldiers to their Emperor as he made his famous visit to their bivouacs on the night before his greatest victory—an acclamation that, to this day, rings in the ear of whoever reads the story of Austerlitz. The thrilling vibration smote the air like the



defiance of a nation, and seemed as prophetic of victory as the jubilant clamour of Gideon. It sounded human, yet savouring of the roar of some ferocious animal. And amid the cheers of an army glorying in its strength could be heard that exultant greeting, "*Vive l'Empereur! Vive l'Empereur!*"

The clock on the mantel struck six, and the sound reached the sleeper indistinctly, like distant land-bells heard at sea; and instantly their reverberation wove itself into his dream in a rhythmical cadence of the bells of the chapel they had left behind. Softly from afar it came, with poesy of incantation—that ringing melody whose voice awakes our happiest and our saddest memories. Its pealing was filled with harmonies of surpassing intensity, like the whisper of breaking waves. All the gladness of youth, all the ecstasy of love rang in the old man's soul through the music of those faint, far-sounding bells, until, with the mystery of an unutterable meaning, their ringing faltered, and was heard no more.

Captain Blythe and the Cossack resumed their walk, and dawn appeared as they sighted the Allied headquarters.

Already the Austrian and Russian camps were astir with drum-beat and bugle-blast, and these reveilles, sounding in a confused medley, impressed the Captain with their droll resemblance to dogs barking at daybreak to one another.

A moment later he stood in the presence of the Czar Alexander and of the Emperor Francis of Austria.

Both were seated at a camp-table, one side of which was covered with a map, whereon the Czar's eyes frequently rested, while upon the other had been spread a frugal breakfast of coffee, biscuit, and ham and eggs, to which the Austrian was applying himself. From a crackling fire of green logs without rose a cloud of aromatic smoke; and before it bent two liveried moujiks, trying to coax forth a brighter blaze. The Czar was a man of fine presence, with florid face, clear grey eyes, thin sandy hair, and salient cheek-bones, which gave an appearance of force to his countenance. He wore a tight green dress-coat with *aiguillettes*, white buckskin breeches, and long polished boots with silver spurs. Upon his shoulders was a mantle, and his cocked hat lay on a chair near by. The Austrian Emperor looked equally splendid in a white dress-coat with gold collar and tight breeches and boots; and he also, while sipping his coffee, held a cloak about him. His intellectual feebleness was apparent, as he asked in guttural German—

"Have my officers their queues properly powdered this morning?"

But before Blythe could declare his ignorance upon this particular, the Czar addressed him in excellent French, with quick, incisive utterance.

"I have sent for you, Monsieur le Capitaine, because you know this field of battle. You have read Thiers' "Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire," which is more than I have been able to do. You have studied the course the action took eighty-five years ago, and should be able to guard us against a repetition of our blunders. It is not paying you an extravagant compliment to say that you are worth more to me than any of my generals, and that I hold you responsible for Austerlitz."

"*Ach, heilige Maria!*" murmured Kaiser Franz, raising his hand to his thick lips, "verily these eggs are hot."

At the words "responsible for Austerlitz" Captain Blythe realised the weird nature of his position. He understood, as never before, that, in principle, the sleeping intelligence is responsible; for who shall say that the mind which consents to wilful wrong, albeit in the fiction of a dream, sustains no moral blemish? He perceived that the dreamland to which he had passed was a reality, and felt

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himself under the control of a ghostly influence he could neither shake off nor resist. He was conscious that the scene before him was no more an hallucination than any of the seeming realities of life which vanish at a touch or fade like melting dreams And for the moment he was appalled at the thought of what might befall him in a trance where the actual pressed so closely upon the visionary, and where the sleeper was answerable to forces and figures apparently as real as himself. He would fain have declined the weighty honour thrust upon him, but the watchful Cossack whispered—

"Tush, fool! Think you to bandy reasons with a Czar?"

Thus tersely admonished, Captain Blythe made desperate efforts to recall the details of the narrative he had so lately read—to fix the blunders of the fateful battle, the confusion of conflicting orders, the loss of the heights of Pratzen, the catastrophe on the frozen lakes In the midst of this mental struggle, the Czar buckled on his sword and rode away to where his generals waited; and poor Blythe was left to the maunderings of the Austrian Emperor about his pretty battalions, with their immaculate coats rendered yellow by exposure,—"what would the Viennese say if they could see them now? would they laugh or swear?"

The steady tramp of marching troops was heard, and the blare of drums and trumpets drew near. The Captain beheld a regiment of Austrian *Kaiserlichs* thronging to the front, with great brass-plated conical shakos, and close-fitting coats, and skin tight trousers that gave them a wasp-like appearance. At their head went a band that filled the air with passionate refrains, stirring the heart with the fire of brave deeds. In his sleep the old man's pulse kindled rapturously, and his face flushed with joy, for the proud air seemed a familiar strain he had sought all his life—to find it at last in the enchantment of a dream Past him they went—the horns, the cornets, the fifes, the drums, the clashing cymbals—their music filled with martial triumph and touched with the thrilling sweetness of Tyrolean echoes, till, as the march died in the distance, there arose a Babel of commands Austrian officers speaking German to Hungarian troops; cavalry shouting in Polish to Croat infantry, Italians, Bohemians, Gallicians, Illyrians, side by side, each using their native dialect, to which Russian officers, galloping about, added the bewilderment of a language intelligible to few but themselves.

Before him extended a marvellous panorama. Immediately in front rose the heights of Pratzen, covered with cannon and infantry, to the right and left stretched long lines of troops, the green Russian uniforms contrasting with the Austrian white. Farther away were Hungarian hussars, in dolmans and colbacks and braided breeches, suggestive of fancy dress; and behind them followed the ubiquitous Cossacks with their shaggy horses and long lances. In the wintry stillness of the Moravian fields, between the assembled armies, rose straight lines of poplars, standing like sentinels between the gathering hosts; and above them came the flush of day and the radiant splendour of the sun of Austerlitz. The smoke of an expiring camp-fire floated lazily across the turquoise-tinted sky, and the snow-crested hill-tops glistened as though touched by an aureole. All sounds were hushed now, and a marvellous quiet prevailed, that, to the dreamer, was intensified by the thought of the storm about to burst. The instant seemed to him one of unspeakable repose, as though the calm of Nature, like a perfect benediction, had overspread and silenced the passions of Man. The sunrise was one of more than earthly beauty, with such effulgence of transcendent beams, such opalescent hues across the heavens, that the Captain in his bewilderment, with thoughts of Christmas still

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fresh in his mind, fancied something of the mystical light of Bethlehem must lie behind that brilliant Orient, to touch the earth with such incomparable glory.

The Czar was gesticulating excitedly to his generals, and the Austrian Emperor had finished his ham and eggs, when from the mist in the ravine beneath Pratzen emerged the French infantry and artillery, with glittering squadrons on the flanks. As the fusilade commenced, the Czar motioned Captain Blythe to him. "You perceive," he said, "the solemnity of this hour. Every form you behold is a spectre—the semblance of its former self. The Fates granted that when the last of those who fought at Austerlitz had died, the field should be fought over by their ghosts. The last of them, a Russian drummer, aged fifteen in December 1805, joined us this morning. All now are here: the men, the vivandières, the horses—even the dogs with their little waggons that draw the big drums in the Austrian bands. For sixty-five years I have watched them gather, and you who live on earth, and have the anguish to see your loved ones taken from you, know not the joy that spirits feel as, in our place of waiting, our comrades reappear and greet us as of old."

And, as he spoke, Blythe noticed hundreds of great birds, crows and vultures they seemed, flying at a distance, and wondered if these, too, were spectres. Then the Czar touched him on the shoulder and added, "Remember your duty: follow near, and keep me from the faults and failures of the flesh!"

The battle had commenced, and the first mistake of 1805 had already repeated itself with a strange fatality: through a misunderstanding of orders, a division of Russian cavalry had taken position on the heights of Pratzen, thus causing a delay in the advance of the second infantry line. It seemed as though the force of destiny could make itself felt even in the land of dreams. The Czar turned upon Blythe with a reproachful look: "Could not you," he cried, "have saved us the repetition of that folly?"

The French advanced rapidly, and at sight of his battalions recoiling before their impetuous onset the Czar's face darkened under a sinister presentiment. Nevertheless Miloradovitch, who commanded the Allied centre, exposed himself with daring courage at the front of the division bearing his name, while approaching from behind could be seen the Russian guard, which, by a further repetition of error, had been stationed too far to the rear to be immediately available. At its head rode the Cuirassier Life Guards, the *élite* of the Muscovite army, resplendent in steel and brass, with floating plumes and long straight swords. This corps instantly fell upon one of Vandamme's regiments, which it crushed before the very eyes of Napoleon, capturing its faded and tattered tricolour flag, the emblem of the conquering revolution. This its captor carried back to the two Emperors, with personal triumph undiminished by a bayonet gash through his face, from which the blood trickled slowly down upon the sparkling decoration at his breast. Captain Blythe looked on with breathless interest, for never had he beheld so splendid an onset: and, moreover, he vaguely remembered reading, years ago it seemed, in Thiers' pages, of this charge and capture of a flag. The Czar smiled and spoke to the wounded soldier, and the Austrian Emperor, with a sour grimace, remarked, like the philosopher he was, "What shabby standards these Frenchmen bear!"

The battle had become engaged as far as the eye could reach, and as the fire grew hotter and the cannon-balls whizzed through the air or ploughed the ground, Blythe wondered that none of their group of brilliant staff-officers had been struck. But now—simultaneously with a sharp crackling of the fire in his room—a violent

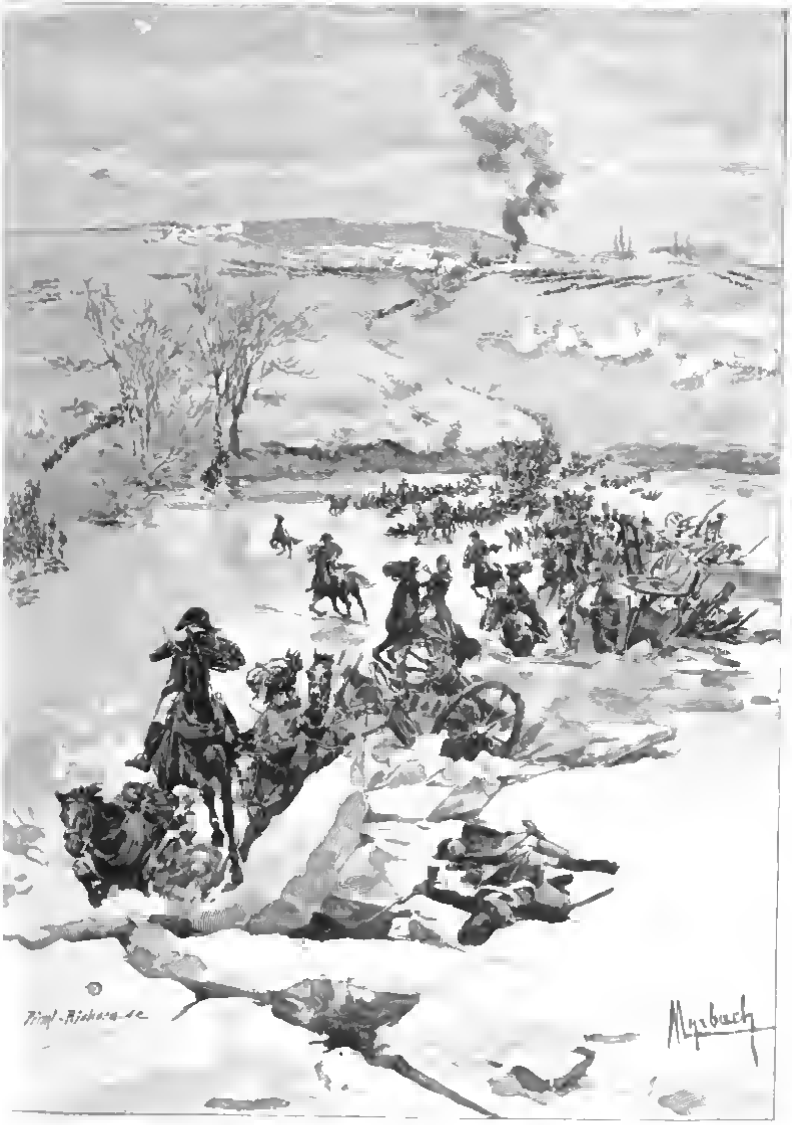
explosion rent the air, and an Austrian general near by fell from his horse face downwards. The Czar beckoned Captain Blythe to his side. "You are mismanaging this!" he exclaimed: "these occurrences are merely a renewal of what happened, and if you do not beve a care, the result will be no better. Already I see you have allowed Buxhoevden, on the left yonder, to mire his troops on ground Thiers must have told you proved untraversable. Look for yourself, and see that his artillery is imbedded to the axles."

The Englishman saw, indeed, not only that the Allied left was upon dangerous ground, but that a portion of the French centre, wheeling to the right, was marching to strike it in flank. Swiftly he beheld the dire catastrophe that followed,—the Russian infantry, shattered and driven upon the frozen lakes, the storm of cannon-balls that rent the ice, the struggling and drowning soldiers, the abendonment of artillery, the flight of the survivors. And now the Allied centre, violently assailed by Soult, gave way. The Austrian soldiers, casting aside their heavy muskets and brass-plated shakos, fled bere-headed and weaponless. Whole batteries of curiously fashioned cannon that had been drawn from Moscow, a thousand miles, were deserted; half a dozen of the gaudy flags of both armies, emblazoned with ravenous, open-mouthed eagles, lay on the ground, in apt token of the woeful fall of those imperial birds, while about them were dead or wounded soldiers, the Austrians in their white, blood-stained coats presenting a ghastly appearance.

Captain Blythe was recalled from the fugitives by a menacing gesture It was the Czar, his broad face flushed with anger, his lips trembling as though with muttered imprecations. He motioned to some of his infantry who lingered, and pointed fiercely at the Englishman, and in tbet gesture was a sentence of death. Half a dozen men formed in line, and the Cossack, whose features were those of Arabella's husband, charged now with Satanic malignity, gave the word of command. Captain Blythe felt tbet he was not dreaming; he bed drifted from dreamland into the realm of spirits—about to become, for him, the realm of death. The scene before him and the events that he had witnessed were not visionary There was the sun in the sky, and yonder the leafless December branches. He stamped on the snow, and the crisp crystal grains flew from under his foot. The inanimate objects, as well as the men before him, were as real as himself. He watched the motions of the soldiers with the resignation of a brave man. Every detail of their equipment was distinct—their dingy uniforms frayed after two montbe' campsigning, their leather sbekos with long *pompons*, their clumsy flintlocks and iron beyonets of a previous reign. He heard the brief order, saw the men tear the psper cartridges with their teeth and ram them home. Then followed the chck of the ramrods striking upon the bullets tbet were to tear his body. In that supreme instant he had neither heroic thoughts nor useless regrets; it merely seemed infinitely sad to fancy this beautiful earth without him—this earth where in the focus of his own small sphere he seemed to have filled so important a place, yet whence his removal would not even be noticed

His heart throbbed violently. Ready! Aim! The flintlocks glittered in the sun; there was a loud report; his heart quivered and stood still; and Captain Blythe lay dying in his armchair before his Christmas fireside.

The door had been opened by a valet, who came to remind him of the hour—dinner would be served at seven, and it was time to dress The words faltered on his lips as he perceived that his master was unconscious. In a few moments a physician had been summoned, and soon after arrived the poet who had been bidden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to his friend's Christmas dinner, and who seated himself at the side of what was to prove Captain Blythe's deathbed. For an hour the sufferer remained speechless, and when at last his lips moved, his words were so strange that those about him listened in silent wonder to the reiteration —

"Responsible for Austerlitz! And shot to death!"

Nor could he be wholly recalled from the phantom land to which he believed that he had wandered, and where he declared he had met his fate. With slow and difficult utterance, that at times sank to a whisper, he told the story of his ghostly adventure.

"But, my dear fellow," said the poet, soothingly, observing that the extraordinary recital agitated him, "you are safe in your own room, which you have not left for an instant."

"Not left in body," replied the dying man; "but in spirit I have been far from here, and those I met have done me a mortal hurt. Believe me, the song of the 'Erlkonig' is founded upon a truth, and the boy's life was charmed from him as he listened"

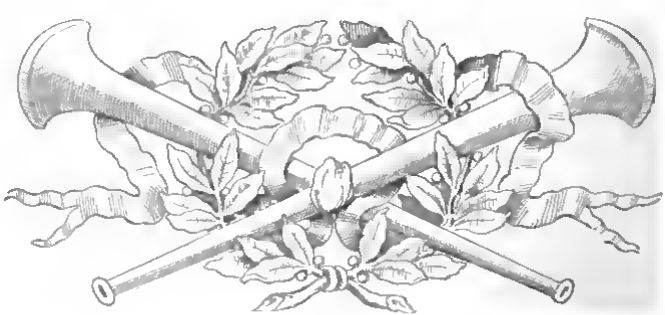
The doctor applied restoratives, and watched attentively. "It is an aneurism of the heart," he mused within himself.

Then the ill man turned, as if, with faculties supernaturally keen, he had divined the thought —

"No," he ejaculated: "it is the Russian bullets."

And nothing could dispel this weird hallucination. He believed that at the cost of life he had touched one of the secrets of occult science, and, until final unconsciousness, his mind was persistently running upon the ghostly bourne into which he had strayed, and whither his spirit was about to return. But his vision gradually assumed a softer aspect, and from the words he muttered it appeared that the scene before him had changed to one of matchless beauty, where stretched a winding river with sunlit castles and vineyards, rich with the radiance of a transfigured morning. And beside him the Elf King whispered words of irresistible persuasion, sweet as the song of birds at break of day,—and the Elf King's phantom daughters beckoned from the night of earth towards the shining river. And when his last breath had passed, the poet, bending at the bedside, was so possessed by the mystery of his fate, that he thought of the friend whose cold hand he still clasped as of one who had fallen a victim to the spectres upon whose domain he had unwittingly trespassed.

WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.



DICK BRACY gazed again at the Hacienda de los Osos, and hesitated. There it lay—its low whitewashed walls looking like a quartz outcrop of the long lazy hillside — unmistakably hot, treeless, and staring broadly in the uninterrupted Californian sunlight. Yet he knew that behind those blistering walls was a reposeful *patio*, surrounded by low-pitched verandahs — that the *casa* was full of roomy corridors, nooks and recesses, in which lurked the shadows of a century, and that hidden by the further wall was a lonely old garden, hoary with gnarled pear-trees and smothered in the spice and dropping leaves of its baking roses. He knew that, although the unwinking sun might glitter on its red tiles, and the unresting trade winds whistle around its angles, it always kept one unvarying temperature and untroubled calm, as if the dignity of years had triumphed over the changes of ephemeral seasons. But would others see it with his eyes? Would his practical, housekeeping aunt, and his pretty modern cousin ——?

"Well, what do you say? Speak the word, and you can go into it with your folks to-morrow. And I reckon you won't want to take anything either, for you'll find everything there—just as the old Don left it. I don't want it, the land is good enough for me; I shall have my *vaqueros* and *rancheros* to look after the crops and the cattle, and they won't trouble you, for their sheds and barns will be two miles away. You can stay there as long as you like, and go when you choose. You might like to try it for a spell, it's all the same to me. But I should think it the sort of thing a man like you would fancy, and it seems the right thing to have you there. Well,—what shall it be? Is it a go?"

Dick knew that the speaker was sincere. It was an offer perfectly characteristic of his friend, the Western millionaire, who had halted by his side, and he knew also that the slow lifting of his bridle-rein, preparatory to starting forward again, was the businesslike gesture of a man who wasted no time even over his acts of impulsive liberality. In another moment he would dismiss the unaccepted offer from his mind—without concern and without resentment.

"Thank you—it is a go," said Dick, gratefully.

Nevertheless, when he reached his own little home in the outskirts of San Francisco that night, he was a trifle nervous in confiding to the lady, who was at once his aunt and housekeeper, the fact that he was now the possessor of a huge

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mansion, in whose *patio* alone the little eight-roomed villa where they had lived contentedly might be casually dropped. "You see, Aunt Viney," he hurriedly explained, "it would have been so ungrateful to have refused him—and it really was an offer as spontaneous as it was liberal. And then, you see, we need occupy only a part of the *casa*."

"And who will look after the other part?" said Aunt Viney, grimly. "That will have to be kept tidy, too; and the servants for such a house, where in heaven are they to come from? Or do they go with it?"

"No," said Dick, quickly; "the servants left with their old master, when Ringstone bought the property. But we'll find servants enough in the neighbourhood—Mexican *peons* and Indians, you know."

Aunt Viney sniffed. "And you'll have to entertain—if it's a big house. There are all your Spanish neighbours. They'll be gallivanting in and out all the time."

"They won't trouble us," he returned, with some hesitation. "You see, they're furious at the old Don for disposing of his lands to an American, and they won't be likely to look upon the strangers in the new place as anything but interlopers."

"Oh, that is it, is it?" ejaculated Aunt Viney, with a slight puckering of her lips. "I thought there was *something*."

"My dear aunt," said Dick, with a sudden illogical heat which he tried to suppress; "I don't know what you mean by 'it' and 'something.' Ringstone's offer was perfectly unselfish; he certainly did not suppose that I would be affected, any more than he would be, by the childish sentimentality of these people over a legitimate everyday business affair. The old Don made a good bargain, and simply sold the land he could no longer make profitable with his obsolete methods of farming, his gangs of idle retainers, and his Noah's Ark machinery, to a man who knew how to use steam reapers, and hired sensible men to work on shares." Nevertheless he was angry with himself for making any explanation, and still more disturbed that he was conscious of a certain feeling that it was necessary.

"I was thinking," said Aunt Viney, quietly, "that if we invited anybody to stay with us—like Cecily, for example—it might be rather dull for her if we had no neighbours to introduce her to."

Dick started; he had not thought of this. He had been greatly influenced by the belief that his pretty cousin, who was to make them a visit, would like the change and would not miss excitement. "We can always invite some girls down there and make our own company," he answered, cheerfully. Nevertheless, he was dimly conscious that he had already made an airy castle of the old hacienda, in which Cecily and her aunt moved *alone*. It was to Cecily that he would introduce the old garden, it was Cecily whom he would accompany through the dark corridors, and with whom he would lounge under the awnings of the verandah. All this innocently, and without prejudice or ulterior thought. He was not yet in love with the pretty cousin whom he had seen but once or twice during the past few years, but it was a possibility not unpleasant to occasionally contemplate. Yet it was equally possible that she might yearn for lighter companionship and accustomed amusement; that the passion-fringed garden and shadow-haunted corridor might be profaned by hoydenish romping and laughter, or by that frivolous flirtation which, in others, he had always regarded as commonplace and vulgar.

Howbeit, at the end of two weeks he found himself regularly installed in the Hacienda de los Osos. His little household, reinforced by his cousin Cecily and three *peons* picked up at Los Pinos, bore their transplantation with a singular equanimity that seemed to him unaccountable. Then occurred one of those reve-

lations of character with which Nature is always ready to trip up merely human judgment. Aunt Viney, an unrelenting widow of calm but unshaken Dutch prejudices, high but narrow in religious belief, merged, without a murmur, into the position of chatelaine of this unconventional, half-Latin household. Accepting the situation without exaltation or criticism, placid but unresponsive amidst the youthful enthusiasm of Dick and Cecily over each quaint detail, her influence was, nevertheless, felt throughout the lingering length and shadowy breadth of the strange old house. The Indian and Mexican servants, at first awed by her practical superiority, succumbed to her half-humorous toleration of their incapacity, and became her devoted slaves. Dick was astonished, and even Cecily was confounded. "Do you know," she said confidentially to her cousin, "that when that brown Conchita thought to please Aunty by wearing white stockings instead of going round as usual with her cinnamon-

"You should have seen Manuel absolutely scrape the ground before her."

coloured bare feet in yellow slippers—which I was afraid would be enough to send Aunty into conniption fits—she actually told her, very quietly, to take them off, and dress according to her habits and her station? And you remember that in her big, square bedroom there is a praying-stool and a ghastly crucifix, at least three feet long, in ivory and black, quite too human for anything? Well, when I offered to put them in the corridor, she said I 'needn't trouble', that really she hadn't noticed them, and they would do very well where they were. You'd think she had been accustomed to this sort of thing all her life. It's just too sweet of her, anyway, even if she's shamming. And if she *is*, she just does it to the life too, and could give those Spanish woman points. Why, she rode *en pillion* on Manuel's mule, behind him, holding on by his sash, across to the corral yesterday, and you should have seen Manuel absolutely scrape the ground before her with his *sombrero*

when he let her down." Indeed, her tall, erect figure in black lustreless silk, appearing in a heavily-shadowed doorway, or seated in a recessed window, gave a new and patrician dignity to the melancholy of the Hacienda. It was pleasant to follow this quietly-ceremonious shadow gliding along the rose garden at twilight, halting at times to bend stiffly over the bushes, garden shears in hand, and carrying a little basket filled with withered but still odorous petals, as if she were grimly gathering the faded roses of her youth.

It was also probable that the lively Cecily's appreciation of her aunt might have been based upon another virtue of that lady—namely, her exquisite tact in dealing with the delicate situation evolved from the always possible relations of the two cousins. It was not to be supposed that the servants would fail to invest the young people with Southern romance, and even believe that the situation was prearranged by the aunt with a view to their eventual engagement. To deal with the problem openly, yet without startling the consciousness of either Dick or Cecily; to allow them the privileges of children subject to the occasional restraints of childhood; to find certain household duties for the young girl that kept them naturally apart until certain hours of general relaxation; to calmly ignore the meaning of her retainers' smiles and glances, and yet to good-humouredly accept their interest as a kind of feudal loyalty, was part of Aunt Viney's deep diplomacy. Cecily enjoyed her freedom and companionship with Dick, as she enjoyed the novel experiences of the old house, the quaint, faded civilisation that it represented, and the change and diversion always acceptable to youth. She did not feel the absence of other girls of her own age; neither was she aware that through this omission she was spared the necessity of a *confidante* or a rival—both equally revealing to her thoughtless enjoyment. They took their rides together openly and without concealment, relating their adventures afterwards to Aunt Viney with a *naïveté* and frankness that dreamed of no suppression. The city-bred Cecily, accustomed to horse exercise solely as an ornamental and artificial recreation, felt for the first time the fearful joy of a dash across a league long plain, with no onlookers but the scattered wild horses she might startle up to scurry before her, or race at her side. Small wonder that, mounted on her fiery little mustang, untrammelled by her short grey riding-habit, free as the wind itself that blew through the folds of her flannel blouse, with her brown hair half-loosed beneath her slouched felt hat, she seemed to Dick a more beautiful and womanly figure than the stiff buckrammed simulation of man's angularity and precision he had seen in the parks. Perhaps one day she detected this consciousness too plainly in his persistent eyes. Up to that moment she had only watched the glittering stretches of yellow grain, in which occasional wind-shorn evergreen oaks, stood mid-leg deep, like cattle in water, the distant silhouette of the Sierras against the steely blue, or perhaps the frankly happy face of the good-looking young fellow at her side. But it seemed to her now that an intruder had entered the field—a stranger before whom she was impelled to suddenly fly—half-laughingly, half-affrightedly—the anxious Dick following wonderingly at her mustang's heels, until she reached the gates of the Hacienda, where she fell into a gravity and seriousness that made him wonder still more. He did not dream that his guileless cousin had discovered, with a woman's instinct, a mysterious invader who sought to share their guileless companionship, only to absorb it entirely, and that its name was—love!

The next day she was so greatly preoccupied with her household duties that she could not ride with him. Dick felt unaccountably lost. Perhaps this check to their daily intercourse was no less accelerating to his feelings than the vague motive that induced Cecily to withhold herself. He moped in the corridor; he

rode out alone, bullying his mustang in proportion as he missed his cousin's gentle companionship, and circling aimlessly, but still unconsciously, around the Hacienda as a centre of attraction. The sun at last was sinking to the accompaniment of a rising wind, which seemed to blow and scatter its broad rays over the shimmering plain until every slight protuberance was burnished into startling brightness, the shadows of the short green oaks grew disproportionally long, and all seemed to point to the white-walled *casa*. Suddenly he started and instantly reined up.

The figure of a young girl, which he had not before noticed, was slowly moving down the half-shadowed lane made by the two walls of the garden and the corral. Cecily! Perhaps she had come out to meet him. He spurred forward; but, as he came nearer, he saw that the figure and its attire were surely not hers. He reined up again abruptly, mortified at his disappointment, and a little ashamed lest

The Gate of the Hacienda.

he should have seemed to have been following an evident stranger. He vaguely remembered, too, that there was a trail to the high road, through a little swale clothed with myrtle and thorn bush which he had just passed, and that she was probably one of his reserved and secluded neighbours—indeed, her dress, in that uncertain light, looked half Spanish. This was more confusing, since his rashness might have been taken for an attempt to force an acquaintance. He wheeled and galloped towards the front of the *casa* as the figure disappeared at the angle of the wall.

"I don't suppose you ever see any of our neighbours?" said Dick to his aunt casually.

"I really can't say," returned the lady, with quiet equanimity. "There were some extraordinary looking foreigners on the road to San Gregorio yesterday. Manuel,

who was driving me, may have known who they were—he is a kind of Indian Papist himself, you know—but *I* didn't. They might have been relations of his for all I know."

At any other time Dick would have been amused at this serene relegation of the lofty Estudillos and Peraltas to the caste of the Indian convert, but he was worried to think that perhaps Cecily was really being bored by the absence of neighbours. After dinner, when they sought the rose garden, he dropped upon the little lichen-scarred stone bench by her side. It was still warm from the sun; the hot musk of the roses filled the air; the whole garden, shielded from the cool evening trade winds by its high walls, still kept the glowing memory of the afternoon sunshine. Aunt Viney, with her garden basket on her arm, moved ghost-like among the distant bushes.

"'You are not getting bored here?' he said"

"I hope you are not getting bored here?" he said, after a slight inconsequent pause.

"Does that mean that *you* are?" she returned, raising her mischievous eyes to his.

"No, but I thought you might find it lonely, without neighbours."

"I stayed in to-day," she said, femininely replying to the unasked question, "because I fancied Aunt Viney might think it selfish of me to leave her alone so much."

"But *you* are not lonely?"

Certainly not! The young lady was delighted with the whole place, with the quaint old garden, the mysterious corridors, the restful quiet of everything, the picture of dear Aunt Viney—who was just the sweetest soul in the world—moving about like the genius of the *casa*. It was such a change to all her ideas, she would never forget it. It was so thoughtful of him, Dick, to have given them all that pleasure.

"And the rides," continued Dick, with the untactful pertinacity of the average man at such moments—"you are not tired of *them*?"

No; she thought them lovely. Such freedom and freshness in the exercise; so different from riding in the city or at watering places, where it was one-half show, and one was always thinking of one's habit or oneself. One quite forgot oneself on that lovely plain—with everything so far away, and only the mountains to look at in the distance. Nevertheless she did not lift her eyes from the point of the little slipper which had strayed beyond her skirt.

Dick was relieved, but not voluble; he could only admiringly follow the curves of her pretty arms and hands, clasped lightly in her lap, down to the point of the little slipper. But even that charming vanishing point was presently withdrawn—possibly through some instinct—for the young lady had apparently not raised her eyes.

"I'm so glad you like it," said Dick earnestly, yet with a nervous hesitation that made his speech seem artificial to his own ears. "You see I—that is—I had an idea that you might like an occasional change of company. It's a great pity we're not on speaking terms with one of these Spanish families. Some of the men, you know, are really fine fellows, with an old-world courtesy that is very charming."

He was surprised to see that she had lifted her head suddenly, with a quick look that however changed to an amused and half coquettish smile.

"I am finding no fault with my present company," she said demurely, dropping her head and eyelids until a faint suffusion seemed to follow the falling lashes over her cheek. "I don't think *you* ought to undervalue it."

If he had only spoken then! The hot scent of the roses hung suspended in the air, which seemed to be hushed around them in mute expectancy; the shadows which were hiding Aunt Viney from view were also closing round the bench where they sat. He was very near her; he had only to reach out his hand to clasp hers, which lay idly in her lap. He felt himself glowing with a strange emanation; he even fancied that she was turning mechanically towards him, as a flower might turn towards the fervent sunlight. But he could not speak; he could scarcely collect his thoughts, conscious though he was of the absurdity of his silence. What was he waiting for? what did he expect? He was not usually bashful, he was no coward; there was nothing in her attitude to make him hesitate to give expression to what he believed was his first real passion. But he could do nothing. He even fancied that his face, turned towards hers, was stiffening into a vacant smile.

The young girl rose. "I think I heard Aunt Viney call me," she said constrainedly, and made a hesitating step forward. The spell which had held Dick seemed to be broken suddenly; he stretched forth his arm to detain her. But the next step appeared to carry her beyond his influence; and it was even with a half movement of rejection that she quickened her pace and disappeared down the path. Dick fell back dejectedly into his seat, yet conscious of a feeling of *relief* that bewildered him.

But only for a moment. A recollection of the chance that he had impotently and unaccountably thrown away returned to him. He tried to laugh, albeit with a glowing cheek, over the momentary bashfulness which he thought had overtaken him, and which must have made him ridiculous in her eyes. He even took a few hesitating steps in the direction of the path where she had disappeared. The sound of voices came to his ear, and the light ring of Cecily's laughter. The colour deepened a little on his cheek; he re-entered the house and went to his room.

The red sunset, still faintly showing through the heavily recessed windows to the opposite wall, made two luminous aisles through the darkness of the long low apartment. From his easy chair he watched the colour drop out of the sky, the yellow plain grow

pallid and seem to stretch itself to infinite rest, then a black line began to deepen and creep towards him from the horizon edge, the day was done. It seemed to him a day lost. He had no doubt now but that he loved his cousin, and the opportunity of telling her so—of profiting by her predisposition of the moment—had passed. She would remember herself, she would remember his weak hesitancy, she would despise him. He rose and walked uneasily up and down. And yet—and it disgusted him with himself still more—he was again conscious of the feeling of relief he had before experienced. A vague formula, "It's better as it is," "Who knows what might have come of it?" he found himself repeating, without reason and without resignation.

Ashamed even of his seclusion, he rose to join the little family circle which now habitually gathered around a table on the verandah of the *patio* under the rays of a swinging lamp, to take their chocolate. To his surprise the verandah was empty and dark; a light shining from the inner drawing-room showed him his aunt in her arm-chair reading, alone. A slight thrill ran over him: Cecily might be still in the garden! He noiselessly passed the drawing-room door, turned into a long corridor, and slipped through a grating in the wall into the lane that separated it from the garden. The gate was still open, a few paces brought him into the long alley of roses. Their strong perfume—confined in the high, hot walls—at first made him giddy. This was followed by an inexplicable languor, he turned instinctively towards the stone bench and sank upon it. The long rows of Calla lilies against the opposite wall looked ghost-like in the darkness, and seemed to have turned their white faces towards him. Then he fancied that *one* had detached itself from the rank and was moving away. He looked again: surely there was something gliding along the wall! A quick tremor of anticipation passed over him. It was Cecily, who had lingered in the garden—perhaps to give him one more opportunity! He rose quickly, and stepped towards the apparition, which had now plainly resolved itself into a slight girlish figure. It slipped on beneath the trees, he followed quickly—his nervous hesitancy had vanished before what now seemed to be a half coy, half coquettish evasion of him. He called softly, "Cecily!" but she did not heed him; he quickened his pace—she increased hers. They were both running. She reached the angle of the wall where the gate opened upon the road. Suddenly she stopped, as if intentionally, in the clear open space before it. He could see her distinctly. The lace mantle slipped from her head and shoulders. It was *not* Cecily!

But it was a face so singularly beautiful and winsome that he was as quickly arrested. It was a woman's deep passionate eyes and heavy hair, joined to a childish oval of cheek and chin, an infantine mouth, and a little nose whose faintly curved outline redeemed the lower face from weakness and brought it into charming harmony with the rest. A yellow rose was pinned in the lustrous black hair above the little ear; a yellow silk shawl or mantle, which had looked white in the shadows, was thrown over one shoulder and twisted twice or thrice around the plump but *petite* bust. The large black velvety eyes were fixed on his in half wonderment, half amusement; the lovely lips were parted in half astonishment and half a smile. And yet she was like a picture, a dream—a materialisation of one's most fanciful imaginings—like anything, in fact, but the palpable flesh and blood she evidently was, standing only a few feet before him, whose hurried breath he could see even now heaving her youthful breast.

His own breath appeared suspended, although his heart beat rapidly as he stammered out, "I beg your pardon—I thought——" He stopped at the recollection that this was the *second* time he had followed her.

She did not speak, although her parted lips still curved with their faint coy

smile. Then she suddenly lifted her right hand, which had been hanging at her side, clasping some long black object like a stick. Without any apparent impulse from her fingers, the stick slowly seemed to broaden in her little hand into the segment of an opening disk, that, lifting to her face and shoulders, gradually eclipsed the upper part of her figure, until, mounting higher, the beautiful eyes and the yellow rose of her hair alone remained above—a large unfurled fan! Then the long eyelashes drooped, as if in a mute farewell, and they too disappeared as the fan was lifted higher. The half-hidden figure appeared to glide to the gateway, lingered for an instant, and vanished. The astounded Dick stepped quickly into the road, but fan and figure were swallowed up in the darkness.

"The half-hidden figure appeared to glide to the gateway."

Amazed and bewildered, he stood for a moment, breathless and irresolute. It was no doubt the same stranger that he had seen before. But *who* was she, and what was she doing there? If she were one of their Spanish neighbours, drawn simply by curiosity to become a trespasser, why had she lingered to invite a scrutiny that would clearly identify her? It was not the escapade of that giddy girl which the lower part of her face had suggested, for such a one would have giggled and instantly flown; it was not the deliberate act of a grave woman of the world, for its sequel was so purposeless. Why had she revealed herself to *him* alone? Dick felt himself glowing with a half-shamed, half-secret pleasure. Then he remembered Cecily, and his own purpose in coming into the garden. He hurriedly made a tour of the walks and shrubbery, ostentatiously calling her, yet seeing, as in a dream, only the beautiful eyes of the stranger still before him, and conscious of an ill-defined remorse and disloyalty he had never known before. But Cecily was not there, and again he experienced the old sensation of relief!

He shut the garden gate, crossed the road, and found the *grille* just closing behind a slim white figure. He started, for it was Cecily, but even in his surprise he was conscious of wondering how he could have ever mistaken the stranger for her. She appeared startled too, she looked pale and abstracted. Could she have been a witness of his strange interview?

Her first sentence dispelled the idea.

"I suppose you were in the garden?" she said, with a certain timidity. "I didn't go there—it seemed so close and stuffy—but walked a little down the lane."

A moment before he would have eagerly told her his adventure; but in the presence of her manifest embarrassment his own increased. He concluded to tell her another time. He murmured vaguely that he had been looking for her in the garden, yet he had a flushing sense of falsehood in his reserve; and they passed silently along the corridor and entered the *patio* together. She lit the hanging lamp mechanically. She certainly *was* pale; her slim hand trembled slightly. Suddenly her eyes met his, a faint colour came into her cheek, and she smiled. She put up her hand with a girlish gesture towards the back of her head.

"What are you looking at? Is my hair coming down?"

"No," hesitated Dick, "but—I—thought—you were looking just a *little* pale."

An aggressive ray slipped into her blue eyes.

"Strange! I thought *you* were. Just now at the *grille* you looked as if the roses hadn't agreed with you."

They both laughed, a little nervously, and Conchita brought the chocolate. When Aunt Viney came from the drawing-room she found the two young people together, and Cecily in a gale of high spirits.

She had had *such* a wonderfully interesting walk, all by herself, alone on the plain. It was really so queer and elfish to find oneself where one could see nothing above or around one anywhere, but stars. Stars above one, to right and left of one, and some so low down they seemed as if they were picketed on the plain. It was so odd to find the horizon line at one's very feet, like a castaway at sea. And the wind! it seemed to move one this way and that way, for one could not see anything, and might really be floating in the air. Only once she thought she saw something, and was quite frightened.

"What was it?" asked Dick quickly.

"Well, it was a large black object; but—it turned out only to be a horse."

She laughed, although she had evidently noticed her cousin's eagerness, and her own eyes had a nervous brightness.

"And where was Dick all this while?" asked Aunt Viney quietly.

Cecily interrupted, and answered for him briskly. "Oh, he was trying to make attar of rose of himself in the garden. He's still stupefied by his own sweetness."

"If this means," said Aunt Viney, with matter-of-fact precision, "that you've been gallivanting all alone, Cecily, on that common plain, where you're likely to meet all sorts of foreigners and tramps and savages, and Heaven knows what other vermin, I shall set my face against a repetition of it. If you *must* go out, and Dick can't go with you—and I must say that even you and he going out together there at night isn't exactly the kind of American Christian example to set to our neighbours—you had better get Concepcion to go with you and take a lantern."

"But there is nobody one meets on the plain—at least, nobody likely to harm one," protested Cecily.

"Don't tell *me*," said Aunt Viney decidedly. "haven't I seen all sorts of queer figures creeping along by the brink after nightfall between San Gregorio and the next *rancho*? Aren't they always skulking backwards and forwards to mass and *aguardiente*?"

"And I don't know why *we* should set any example to our neighbours. We don't see much of them, or they of us."

"Of course not," returned Aunt Viney, "because all proper Spanish young

ladies are shut up behind their *grilles* at night You don't see *them* trapesing over the plain in the darkness, *with* or *without* cavaliers! Why, Don Rafael would lock one of *his* sisters up in a convent, and consider her disgraced for ever if he heard of it'

Dick felt his cheeks burning; Cecily slightly paled Yet both said eagerly together: "Why, what do *you* know about it, Aunty?"

"A great deal," returned Aunt Viney quietly, holding her tatting up to the light and examining the stitches with a critical eye "I've got my eyes about me, thank Heaven! even if my ears don't understand the language. And there's a great deal, my dears, that you young people might learn from these Papists"

"And do you mean to say," continued Dick, with a glowing cheek and an uneasy smile, "that Spanish girls don't go out alone?"

"No young *lady* goes out without her duenna," said Aunt Viney emphatically. "Of course there's the Concha variety, that go out without even stockings."

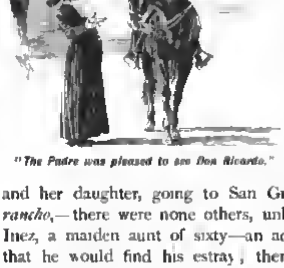
As the conversation flagged after this, and the young people once or twice yawned nervously, Aunt Viney thought they had better go to bed.

But Dick did not sleep The beautiful face beamed out again from the darkness of his room; the light that glimmered through his deep-set curtainless windows had an odd trick of bringing out certain hanging articles, or pieces of furniture, into a resemblance to a mantled figure. The deep, velvety eyes, fringed with long brown lashes, again looked into his with amused childlike curiosity He scouted the harsh criticisms of Aunt Viney, even while he shrank from proving to her her mistake in the quality of his mysterious visitant. Of course she was a lady—far superior to any of her race whom he had yet met. Yet how should he find *who* she was? His pride and a certain chivalry forbade his questioning the servants—before whom it was the rule of the household to avoid all reference to their neighbours. He would make the acquaintance of the old *padre*—perhaps *he* might talk He would ride early along the trail in the direction of the nearest *rancho*,—Don Josè Amador's,—a thing he had hitherto studiously refrained from doing It was three miles away. She must have come that distance, but not *alone*. Doubtless she had kept her duenna in waiting in the road Perhaps it was she who had frightened Cecily. Had Cecily told *all* she had seen? Her embarrassed manner certainly suggested more than she had told. He felt himself turning hot with an indefinite uneasiness. Then he tried to compose himself. After all, it was a thing of the past. The fair unknown had bribed the duenna for once, no doubt—had satisfied her girlish curiosity—she would not come again! But this thought brought with it such a sudden sense of utter desolation, a deprivation so new and startling, that it frightened him Was his head turned by the witcheries of some black-eyed schoolgirl whom he had seen but once? Or—he felt his cheeks glowing in the darkness—was it really a case of love at first sight, and she herself had been impelled by the same yearning that now possessed him? A delicious satisfaction followed, that left a smile on his lips as if it had been a kiss He knew now why he had so strangely hesitated with Cecily. He had never really loved her—he had never known what love was till now!

He was up early the next morning, skimming the plain on the back of "Chu Chu," before the Hacienda was stirring He did not want any one to suspect his destination, and it was even with a sense of guilt that he dashed along the swale in the direction of the Amador *rancho*. A few *vaqueros*, an old digger squaw carrying a basket, two little Indian acolytes—on their way to mass—passed him. He was surprised to find that there were no ruts of carriage wheels within three miles of the *casa*, and evidently no track for carriages through the swale *She* must have come on *horseback* A

broader highway, however, intersected the trail at a point where the low walls of the Amador *rancho* came in view. Here he was startled by the apparition of an old fashioned family carriage drawn by two large piebald mules. But it was unfortunately closed. Then, with a desperate audacity new to his reserved nature, he ranged close beside it, and even stared in the windows. A heavily mantled old woman, whose brown face was in high contrast to her snow white hair, sat in the back seat. Beside her was a younger companion, with the odd blonde hair and blue eyes sometimes seen in the higher Castilian type. For an instant the blue eyes caught his, half-coquettishly. But the girl was *not* at all like his mysterious visitor, and he fell, discomfited, behind.

He had determined to explain his trespass on the grounds of his neighbour, if questioned, by the excuse that he was hunting a strayed mustang. But his presence, although watched with a cold reserve by the few *peons* who were lounging near the gateway, provoked no challenge from them; and he made a circuit of the low *adobe* walls, with their barred windows and cinnamon-tiled roofs, without molestation—but equally without satisfaction. He felt he was a fool for imagining that he would see her in that way. He turned his horse towards the little Mission half a mile away. There he had once met the old *padre*, who spoke a picturesque but limited English: now he was only a few yards ahead of him, just turning into the church. The *padre* was pleased to see Don Ricardo; it was an unusual thing for the *Americanos*, he observed, to be up so early for himself he had his functions, of course. No, the ladies that the *Caballero* had seen had not been to mass! They were Donna Maria and her daughter, going to San Gregorio. They comprised *all* the family at the *rancho*,—there were none others, unless the *Caballero*, of a possibility, meant Donna Inez, a maiden aunt of sixty—an admirable woman, a saint on earth! He trusted that he would find his estray; there was no doubt a mark upon it, otherwise the plain was illimitable; there were many horses—the world was wide!



"The Padre was pleased to see Don Ricardo."

Dick turned his face homewards a little less adventurously, and it must be confessed, with a growing sense of his folly. The keen dry morning air brushed away his fancies of the preceding night; the beautiful eyes that had lured him thither seemed to flicker and be blown out by its practical breath. He began to think remorsefully of his cousin, of his aunt—of his treachery to that reserve which the little alien household had maintained towards their Spanish neighbours. He found Aunt Viney and Cecily at breakfast—Cecily, he thought, looking a trifle pale. Yet (or was it only his fancy?) she seemed curious about his morning ride. And he became more reticent.

"You must see a good many of our neighbours when you are out so early?"

"Why?" he asked shortly, feeling his colour rise.

"Oh, because—because we don't see them at any other time."

"I saw a very nice chap—I think the best of the lot," he began, with assumed joculanty; then, seeing Cecily's eyes suddenly fixed on him, he added, somewhat lamely—"the *padre*! There were also two women in a queer coach."

"Donna Maria Amador, and Doña Felipa Peralta—her daughter by her first

husband," said Aunt Viney quietly. "When you see the horses you think it's a circus, when you look inside the carriage you *know* it's a funeral."

Aunt Viney did not condescend to explain how she had acquired her genealogical knowledge of her neighbour's family, but succeeded in breaking the restraint between the young people. Dick proposed a ride in the afternoon, which was cheerfully accepted by Cecily. Their intercourse apparently recovered its old frankness and freedom, marred only for a moment when they set out on the plain. Dick, really to forget his preoccupation of the morning, turned his horse's head *away* from the trail, to ride in another direction, but Cecily oddly, and with an exhibition of caprice quite new to her, insisted upon taking the old trail. Nevertheless they met nothing, and soon became absorbed in the exercise. Dick felt something of his old tenderness return to this wholesome, pretty girl at his side, perhaps he betrayed it in his voice, or in an unconscious lingering by her bridle rein, but she accepted it with a naive reserve which he naturally attributed to the effect of his own previous preoccupation. He bore it so gently, however, that it awakened her interest, and, possibly, her pique. Her reserve relaxed, and by the time they returned to the Hacienda they had regained something of their former intimacy. The dry, incisive breath of the plains swept away the last lingering remnants of yesterday's illusions. Under this frankly open sky, in this clear perspective of the remote Sierras, which admitted no fanciful deception of form or distance—there remained nothing but a strange incident—to be later explained or forgotten. Only he could not bring himself to talk to *her* about it.

After dinner, and a decent lingering for coffee on the verandah, Dick rose, and leaning half caressingly, half mischievously, over his aunt's rocking chair, but with his eyes on Cecily, said:

"I've been deeply considering, dear Aunty, what you said last evening of the necessity of our offering a good example to our neighbours. Now, although Cecily and I are cousins, yet, as I am *head* of the house, Lord of the Manor and *Padron*, according to the Spanish ideas I am her recognised guardian and protector, and it seems to me it is my positive *duty* to accompany her if she wishes to walk out this evening."

A momentary embarrassment—which, however, changed quickly into an answering smile to her cousin—came over Cecily's face. She turned to her aunt.

"Well, don't go too far," said that lady quietly.

When they closed the *grille* behind them and stepped into the lane, Cecily shot a quick glance at her cousin.

"Perhaps you'd rather walk in the garden?"

"I? Oh no," he answered honestly. "But"—he hesitated—"would you?"

"Yes," she said faintly.

He impulsively offered his arm; her slim hand slipped lightly through it and rested on his sleeve. They crossed the lane together, and entered the garden. A load appeared to be lifted from his heart; the moment seemed propitious,—here was a chance to recover his lost ground, to regain his self-respect and perhaps his cousin's affection. By a common instinct, however, they turned to the right, and *away* from the stone bench, and walked slowly down the broad *allée*.

They talked naturally and confidingly of the days when they had met before, of old friends they had known and changes that had crept into their young lives; they spoke affectionately of the grim, lonely, but self-contained old woman they had just left, who had brought them thus again together. Cecily talked of Dick's

studies, of the scientific work on which he was engaged, that was to bring him, she was sure, fame and fortune! They talked of the thoughtful charm of the old house, of its quaint old-world flavour. They spoke of the beauty of the night, the flowers and the stars, in whispers, as one is apt to do—as fearing to disturb a super-sensitiveness in nature.

They had come out later than on the previous night; and the moon, already risen above the high walls of the garden, seemed a vast silver shield caught in the interlacing tops of the old pear trees, whose branches crossed its bright field like dark bends or bars. As it rose higher, it began to separate the lighter shrubbery, and open white lanes through the olive trees. Damp currents of air, alternating with drier heats, on what appeared to be different levels, moved across the whole garden, or gave way at times to a breathless lull and hush of everything, in which the long rose-alley seemed to be swooning in its own spices. They had reached the bottom of the garden, and had turned, facing the upper moonlit extremity and the bare stone bench. Cecily's voice faltered, her hand leaned more heavily on his arm, as if she were overcome by the strong perfume. His right hand began to steal towards hers. But she had stopped: she was trembling.

"Sitting alone on the bench before him"

"Go on," she said, in a half-whisper. "Leave me a moment; I'll join you afterwards."

"You are ill, Cecily! It's those infernal flowers!" said Dick earnestly. "Let me help you to the bench."

"No—it's nothing. Go on, please. Do! Will you go!"

She spoke with imperiousness, unlike herself. He walked on mechanically a dozen paces, and turned. She had disappeared. He remembered there was a

smaller gate opening upon the plain near where they had stopped. Perhaps she had passed through that. He continued on, slowly, towards the upper end of the garden, occasionally turning to await her return. In this way he gradually approached the stone bench. He was facing about to continue his walk, when his heart seemed to stop beating. The beautiful visitor of last night was sitting alone on the bench before him!

She had not been there a moment before; he could have sworn it. Yet there was no illusion now of shade or distance. She was scarcely six feet from him, in the bright moonlight. The whole of her exquisite little figure was visible, from her lustrous hair down to the tiny, black satin, low-quartered slipper, held as by two toes. Her face was fully revealed; he could see even the few minute freckles, like powdered allspice, that heightened the pale satin sheen of her beautifully rounded cheek; he could detect even the moist shining of her parted red lips, the white outlines of her little teeth, the length of her curved lashes, and the meshes of the black lace veil that fell from the yellow rose above her ear to the black silk *camisa*; he noted even the thick yellow satin *saya*, or skirt, heavily flounced with black lace and bugles, and that it was a different dress from that worn on the preceding night, a half gala costume, carried with the indescribable air of a woman looking her best and pleased to do so: all this he had noted, drawing nearer and nearer, until near enough to forget it all and drown himself in the depths of her beautiful eyes. For they were no longer childlike and wondering; they were glowing with expectancy, anticipation—love!

He threw himself passionately on the bench beside her. Yet, even if he had known her language, he could not have spoken. She leaned towards him, their eyes seemed to meet caressingly, as in an embrace. Her little hand slipped from the yellow folds of her skirt to the bench. He eagerly seized it. A subtle thrill ran through his whole frame. There was no delusion here; it was flesh and blood, warm, quivering, and even tightening round his own. He was about to carry it to his lips, when she rose and stepped backwards. He pressed eagerly forward. Another backward step brought her to the pear tree, where she seemed to plunge into its shadow. Dick Bracy followed—and the same shadow seemed to fold them in its embrace.

* * * * * *

He did not return to the verandah and chocolate that evening, but sent word from his room that he had retired, not feeling well.

Cecily, herself a little nervously exalted, corroborated the fact of his indisposition by telling Aunt Viney that the close odours of the rose garden had affected them both. Indeed, she had been obliged to leave before him. Perhaps in waiting for her return—and she really was not well enough to go back—he was exposed to the night air too long. She was very sorry.

Aunt Viney heard this with a slight contraction of her brows and a renewed scrutiny of her knitting; and, having satisfied herself by a personal visit to Dick's room that he was not alarmingly ill, set herself to find out what was really the matter with the young people; for there was no doubt that Cecily was in some vague way as disturbed and preoccupied as Dick. He rode out again early the next morning, returning to his studies in the library directly after breakfast, and Cecily was equally reticent, except when, to Aunt Viney's perplexity, she found excuses for Dick's manner on the ground of his absorption in his work, and that he was probably being bored by want of society. She proposed that she should ask an old schoolfellow to visit them.

"It would give Dick a change of ideas, and he would not be perpetually obliged to look so closely after me." She blushed slightly under Aunt Viney's gaze, and added hastily, "I mean, of course, he would not feel it his *duty*."

She even induced her aunt to drive with her to the old mission church, where she displayed a pretty vivacity and interest in the people they met, particularly a few youthful and picturesque *caballeros*. Aunt Viney smiled gravely. Was the poor child developing an unlooked-for coquetry, or preparing to make the absent-minded Dick jealous? Well, the idea was not a bad one. In the evening she astonished the two cousins by offering to accompany them into the garden—a suggestion accepted with eager and effusive politeness by each, but carried out with great awkwardness by the *distrait* young people later. Aunt Viney clearly saw that it was not her *presence* that was required. In this way two or three days elapsed without apparently bringing the relations of Dick and Cecily to any more satisfactory conclusion. The diplomatic Aunt Viney confessed herself puzzled.

One night it was very warm; the usual trade winds had died away before sunset, leaving an unwonted hush in sky and plain. There was something so portentous in this sudden withdrawal of that rude stimulus to the otherwise monotonous level, that a recurrence of such phenomena was always known as "earthquake weather." The wild cattle moved uneasily in the distance without feeding; herds of unbroken mustangs approached the confines of the Hacienda in vague timorous squads. The silence and stagnation of the old house was oppressive, as if the life had really gone out of it at last; and Aunt Viney, after waiting impatiently for the young people to come in to chocolate, rose grimly, set her lips together, and went out into the lane. The gate of the rose garden opposite was open. She walked determinedly forward and entered.

In that doubly stagnant air the odour of the roses was so suffocating and overpowering that she had to stop to take breath. The whole garden, except a near cluster of pear trees, was brightly illuminated by the moonlight. No one was to be seen along the length of the broad *allée*, strewn an inch deep with scattered red and yellow petals—colourless in the moonbeams. She was turning away, when Dick's familiar voice, but with a strange accent of entreaty in it, broke the silence. It seemed to her vaguely to come from within the pear tree shadow.

"But we must understand one another, my darling! Tell me all. This suspense, this mystery, this brief moment of happiness, and these hours of parting and torment, are killing me!"

A slight cough broke from Aunt Viney. She had heard enough—she did not wish to hear more. The mystery was explained. Dick loved Cecily; the coyness or hesitation was not on *his* part. Some idiotic girlish caprice, quite inconsistent with what she had noticed at the mission church, was keeping Cecily silent, reserved, and exasperating to her lover. She would have a talk with the young lady, without revealing the fact that she had overheard them. She was perhaps a little hurt that affairs should have reached this point without some show of confidence to her from the young people. Dick might naturally be reticent—but Cecily!

She did not even look towards the pear trees, but turned and walked stiffly out of the gate. As she was crossing the lane she suddenly started back in utter dismay and consternation! For Cecily, her niece—in her own proper person—was actually just coming *out of the house!*

Aunt Viney caught her wrist. "Where have you been?" she asked quickly.

"In the house," stammered Cecily, with a frightened face.

"You have not been in the garden with Dick?" continued Aunt Viney sharply, yet with a hopeless sense of the impossibility of the suggestion.

"No, I was not even going there. I thought of just strolling down the lane."

The girl's accents were truthful, more than that, she absolutely looked relieved by her aunt's question. "Do you want me, Aunty?" she added, quickly.

"Yes—no. Run away, then—but don't go far."

At any other time Aunt Viney might have wondered at the eagerness with which Cecily tripped away; now she was only anxious to get rid of her. She entered the *casa* hurriedly.

"Send Josefa to me at once," she said to Manuel.

Josefa, the housekeeper—a fat Mexican woman, appeared. "Send Concha and the other maids here." They appeared, mutely wondering. Aunt Viney glanced hurriedly over them—they were all there—a few comely, but not *too* attractive, and all stupidly complacent. "Have you girls any friends here this evening—or are you expecting any?" she demanded. Of a surety, no!—as the *padrona* knew—it was not night for church. "Very well," returned Aunt Viney; "I thought I heard your voices in the garden; understand I want no gallivanting there. Go to bed."

She was relieved! Dick certainly was not guilty of a low intrigue with one of the maids. But who and what was she?

Dick was absent again from chocolate; there was unfinished work to do. Cecily came in later, just as Aunt Viney was beginning to be anxious. Had she appeared distressed or piqued by her cousin's conduct, Aunt Viney might have spoken; but there was a pretty colour on her cheek—the result, she said, of her rapid walking, and the fresh air. did Aunt Viney know that a cool breeze had just risen?—and her delicate lips were wreathed at times in a faint retrospective smile. Aunt Viney stared; certainly the girl was not pining! What young people were made of nowadays she really couldn't conceive. She shrugged her shoulders and resumed her tatting.

Nevertheless, as Dick's unfinished studies seemed to have whitened his cheek and impaired his appetite the next morning, she announced her intention of driving out towards the mission alone. When she returned at luncheon she further astonished the young people by casually informing them they would have Spanish visitors to dinner—namely, their neighbours, Donna Maria Amador and the Doña Felipa Peralta.

Both faces were turned eagerly towards her, both said almost in the same breath, "But, Aunt Viney! you don't know them! However did you——? What does it all mean?"

"My dears," said Aunt Viney placidly, "Mrs Amador and I have always nodded to each other, and I knew they were only waiting for the slightest encouragement. I gave it, and they're coming."

It was difficult to say whether Cecily's or Dick's face betrayed the greater delight and animation. Aunt Viney looked from the one to the other. It seemed as if her attempt at diversion had been successful.

"Tell us all about it, you dear, clever, artful Aunty!" said Cecily gaily.

"There's nothing whatever to tell, my love! It seems, however, that the young one, Doña Felipa, has seen Dick, and remembers him." She shot a keen glance at Dick, but was obliged to admit that the rascal's face remained unchanged. "And I wanted to bring a cavalier for *you*, dear, but Don José's nephew isn't at home now." Yet here, to her surprise, Cecily was faintly blushing.

Early in the afternoon the piebald horses and dark brown chariot of the Amadors drew up before the gateway. The young people were delighted with Doña Felipa, and thought her blue eyes and tawny hair gave an added piquancy to her colourless satin skin and otherwise distinctively Spanish face and figure.

Aunt Viney, who entertained Donna Maria, was nevertheless watchful of the others; but failed to detect in Dick's effusive greeting, or the Doña's coquettish smile of recognition, any suggestion of previous confidences. It was rather to Cecily that Doña Felipa seemed to be characteristically exuberant and childishly feminine. Both mother and step-daughter spoke a musical infantine English, which the daughter supplemented with her eyes, her eyebrows, her little brown fingers, her plump shoulders, a dozen charming intonations of voice, and a complete vocabulary in her active and emphatic fan.

The young lady went over the house with Cecily curiously, as if recalling some old memories. "Ah, yes, I remember it—but it was long ago, and I was very leetle—you comprehend, and I have not arrive mooch when the old Don was alone. It was too—too—what you call melank—oaly. And the old man have not make mooch to himself of company."

"Then there were no young people in the house, I suppose?" said Cecily, smiling.

"No—not since the old man's father lif. Then there were *two*. It is a good number, this two, eh?" She gave a single gesture, which took in, with Cecily, the distant Dick, and with a whole volume of suggestion in her shoulders, and twirling fan, continued: "Ah! two sometime make *one*—is it not? But not *then* in the old time—ah, no! It is a sad story. I shall tell it to you some time but not to *him*."

But Cecily's face betrayed no undue bashful consciousness, and she only asked, with a quiet smile, "Why not to—to my cousin?"

"*Imbecile!*" responded that lively young lady.

After dinner the young people proposed to take Doña Felipa into the rose garden, while Aunt Viney entertained Donna Maria on the verandah. The young girl threw up her hands with an affectation of horror. "Santa Maria!—in the rose garden? After the *Angelus*, you and him? Have you not heard?"

But here Donna Maria interposed. Ah! Santa Maria! What was all that! Was it not enough to talk old woman's gossip and tell *vaqueros* tales at home, without making uneasy the strangers? She would have none of it. "*Vamos!*"

Nevertheless Doña Felipa overcame her horror of the rose garden at infelicitous hours, so far as to permit herself to be conducted by the cousins into it, and to be installed like a rose queen on the stone bench, while Dick and Cecily threw themselves in submissive and imploring attitudes at her little feet. The young girl looked mischievously from one to the other.

"It ees very pretty, but all the same I am not a rose: I am what you call a big goose-berry! Eh—is it not?"

The cousins laughed, but without any embarrassed consciousness. "Doña Felipa knows a sad story of this house," said Cecily, "but she will not tell it before you, Dick."

Dick, looking up at the coquettish little figure, with Heaven knows what *other* memories in his mind, implored and protested.

"Ah! but this little story—she ees not so mooch sad ot herself as she ees str-r-rango!" She gave an exaggerated little shiver under her lace shawl, and closed her eyes meditatively.

"Go on," said Dick, smiling in spite of his interested expectation.

Doña Felipa took her fan in both hands, spanning her knees, leaned forward, and after a preliminary compressing of her lips and knitting of her brows, said,

"It was a long time ago. Don Gregorio he have his daughter Rosita here, and for her he will fill all thees rose garden and gif to her; for she like mooch to

lif with the rose. She ees very pret-ty. You shall have seen her picture here in the *casa*. No? It have hang under the crucifix in the corner room, turn around to the wall—*why*, you shall comprehend when I have made finish thees story. Comes to them here one day Don Vincente, Don Gregorio's nephew, to lif when his father die. He was yong, a *pollio*—same as Rosita. They were mooch together, they have make lofe. What will you?—it ees always the same. The Don Gregorio have comprehend; the frends have all comprehend; in a year they will make marry. Doña Rosita she go to Monterey to see his family. There ees an English war ship come there, and Rosita she ees very gay with the officers, and make the flirtation very mooch. Then Don Vincente he is onhappy, and he revenge himself to make lofe with another. When Rosita come back it

"Dick and Cecily threw themselves in submissive and imploring attitudes at her little feet"

is very miserable for them both, but they say nossing. The war-ship he have gone away, the other girl Vincente he go not to no more. All the same, Rosita and Vincente are very *triste*, and the family will not know what to make. Then Rosita she is sick and eat nossing, and walk to herself all day in the rose garden, until she is as white and fade away as the rose. And Vincente he eat nossing, but drink mooch *aguardiente*. Then he have fever and go dead. And Rosita she have fainting and fits; and one day they have look for her in the rose garden, and she is not! And they poosh and poosh in the ground for her, and they find her with so mooch rose-leaves—so deep—on top of her. *She* has go dead. It is a very sad story, and when you hear it you are very very mooch dissatisfied."

It is to be feared that the two Americans were not as thrilled by this sad recital as the fair narrator had expected, and even Dick ventured to point out that those sort of things happened also to his countrymen, and were not peculiar to the *casa*.

"But you said that there was a terrible sequel," suggested Cecily smilingly; "tell us *that*. Perhaps Mr Bracy may receive it a little more politely."

An expression of superstitious gravity, half real, half simulated, came over Doña Felipa's face, although her vivacity of gesticulation and emphasis did not relax. She cast a hurried glance around her, and leaned a little forward towards the cousins.

"When there are no more young people in the *casa* because they are dead," she continued, in a lower voice, "Don Gregorio he is very melank-oaly, and he have no more company for many years. Then there was a *rodeo* near the Hacienda, and there came five or six *caballeros* to stay with him for the feast. *Notabilmente* comes then Don Jorge Martinez. He is a bad man—so weeked—a Don Juan for making lofe to the ladies. He lounge in the garden, he smoke his cigarette, he twist the moustache—so! One day he came in, and he laugh and wink so, and say, 'Oh the weeked, sly Don Gregorio! He have hid away in the *casa* a beautiful, pret-ty girl, and he will nossing say.' And the other *caballeros* say, 'Mira! what is this? there is not so mooch as one young lady in the *casa*.' And Don Jorge he wink, and he say, 'Imbeciles! pigs!' And he walk in the garden and twist his moustache more than ever. And one day, behold! he walk into the *casa*, very white and angry, and he swear mooch to himself, and he orders his horse, and he ride away, and never come back no more, never-r-r! And one day another *caballero*, Don Esteban Briones, he came in, and say, 'Hola! Don Jorge has forgotten his pret-ty girl: he have left her over on the garden bench. Truly I have seen.' And they say, 'We will too.' And they go, and there is nossing. And they say, 'Imbecile and pig!' But he is not imbecile and pig, for he has seen, and Don Jorge has seen, and why? For it is not a girl, but what you call her—a ghost! And they will that Don Esteban should make a picture of her—a design, and he make one. And old Don Gregorio he say, '*Madre de Dios!* it is Rosita'—the same that hung under the crucifix in the big room."

"And is that all?" asked Dick, with a somewhat pronounced laugh, but a face that looked quite white in the moonlight.

"No, it ees *not* all. For when Don Gregorio got himself more company another time—it ees all yonge ladies, and my aunt she is invite too; for she was yonge then, and she herself have tell to me this:—

"One night she is in the garden with the other girls, and when they want to go in the *casa* one have say, 'Where is Francisca Pacheco? Look, she came here with us, and now she is not.' Another one say, 'She have conceal herself to make us affright.' And my aunt she say, 'I will go seek that I shall find her.' And she go. And when she came to the pear tree, she heard Francesca's voice, and it say to some one she see not, 'Fly! *vamos!* some one have come.' And then she come at the moment upon Francisca, very white and trembling, and—alone. And Francisca she have run away and say nossing, and shut herself in her room. And one of the other girls say: 'It is the handsome *caballero* with the little black moustache and sad white face that I have seen in the garden that make this. It is truly that he is some poor relation of Don Gregorio, or some mad kinsman that he will not we should know.' And my aunt ask Don Gregorio, for she is yonge. And he have say: 'What silly fool ees thees? There is not one *caballero* here, but myself.' And when the other young

girl have tell to him how the *caballero* look, he say: 'The saints save us! I cannot more say. It ees Don Vincente, who haf gone dead.' And he cross himself, and—— But look! *Madre de Dios!* Mees Cecily, you are ill—you are affrighted. I am a gabbling fool! Help her, Don Ricardo; she is falling!"

But it was too late: Cecily had tried to rise to her feet, had staggered forward and fallen in a faint on the bench.

* * * * * *

Dick did not remember how he helped to carry the insensible Cecily to the *casa*, nor what explanation he had given to the alarmed inmates of her sudden attack. He recalled vaguely that something had been said of the overpowering perfumes of the garden at that hour, that the lively Felipa had become half hysterical in her remorseful apologies, and that Aunt Viney had ended the scene by carrying Cecily into her own room, where she presently recovered a still trembling but reticent consciousness. But the fainting of his cousin and the presence of a real emergency, had diverted his imagination from the vague terror that had taken possession of it, and for the moment enabled him to control himself. With a desperate effort he managed to keep up a show of hospitable civility to his Spanish friends until their early departure. Then he hurried to his own room. So bewildered and horrified he had become, and a prey to such superstitious terrors, that he could not at that moment bring himself to the test of looking for the picture of the alleged Rosita, which might still be hanging in his aunt's room. If it were really the face of his mysterious visitant—in his present terror—he felt that his reason might not stand the shock. He would look at it to-morrow, when he was calmer! Until then he would believe that the story was some strange coincidence with what must have been his hallucination, or a vulgar trick to which he had fallen a credulous victim. Until then he would believe that Cecily's fright had been only the effect of Doña Felipa's story, acting upon a vivid imagination, and not a terrible confirmation of something she had herself seen. He threw himself, without undressing, upon his bed in a benumbing agony of doubt.

The gentle opening of his door and the slight rustle of a skirt started him to his feet with a feeling of new and overpowering repulsion. But it was a familiar figure that he saw in the long aisle of light which led from his recessed window, whose face was white enough to have been a spirit's, and whose finger was laid upon its pale lips, as it softly closed the door behind it.

"Cecily!"

"Hush!" she said, in a distracted whisper. "I felt I must see you to-night. I could not wait until day—no, not another hour! I could not speak to you before them. I could not go into that dreadful garden again, or beyond the walls of this house. Dick, I want to—I *must* tell you something! I would have kept it from every one—from you most of all! I know you will hate me, and despise me; but, Dick, listen!"—she caught his hand despairingly, drawing it towards her—"that girl's awful story was *true*!" She threw his hand away.

"And you have seen *her*!" said Dick, frantically. "Good God!"

The young girl's manner changed. "*Her!*" she said, half scornfully, "you don't suppose I believe *that* story. No? I—I—don't blame me, Dick—I have seen *him*."

"Him?"

She pushed him nervously into a seat, and sat down beside him. In the half light of the moon, despite her pallor and distraction, she was still very human, womanly and attractive in her disorder.

"Listen to me, Dick. Do you remember one afternoon, when we were riding

together, I got ahead of you, and dashed off to the *casa*. I don't know what possessed me, or *why* I did it. I only know I wanted to get home quickly, and get away from you. No, I was not angry, Dick, at *you*; it did not seem to be *that*; I—well, I confess I was *frightened*—at something, I don't know what. When I wheeled round into the lane, I saw—a man—a young gentleman standing by the garden-wall. He was very picturesque-looking, in his red sash, velvet jacket and round silver buttons, handsome, but oh, so pale and sad! He looked at me very eagerly, and then suddenly drew back, and I heard you on Chu Chu coming at my heels. You must have seen him and passed him too, I thought: but when you said nothing of it, I—I don't know why, Dick, I said nothing of it too. Don't speak!" she

"Cecily!"

added, with a hurried gesture: "I know *now* why you said nothing,—*you* had not seen him."

She stopped, and put back a wisp of her disordered chestnut hair.

"The next time was the night *you* were so queer, Dick, sitting on that stone bench. When I left you—I thought you didn't care to have me stay—I went to seek Aunt Viney at the bottom of the garden. I was very sad, but suddenly I found myself very gay, talking and laughing with her in a way I could not account for. All at once, looking up, I saw *him* standing by the little gate, looking at me very sadly. I think I would have spoken to Aunt Viney, but he put his finger to his lips—his hand was so slim and white, quite like a hand in one of those Spanish pictures—and moved slowly backwards into the lane, as if he wished to speak with *me* only—out there. I know I ought to have spoken to Aunty, I knew it was

wrong what I did, but he looked so earnest, so appealing, so awfully sad, Dick, that I slipped past Aunty and went out of the gate. Just then she missed me, and called. He made a kind of despairing gesture, raising his hand Spanish fashion to his lips, as if to say good night. You'll think me bold, Dick, but I was so anxious to know what it all meant, that I gave a glance behind to see if Aunty was following, before I should go right up to him and demand an explanation. But when I faced round again, he was gone! I walked up and down the lane and out on the plain nearly half an hour, seeking him. It was strange, I know; but I was not a bit *frightened*, Dick—that was so queer—but I was only amazed and curious."

"As if to say good night"

The look of spiritual terror in Dick's face here seemed to give way to a less exalted disturbance, as he fixed his eyes on Cecily's.

"You remember I met *you* coming in: you seemed so queer then that I did not say anything to you, for I thought you would laugh at me, or reproach me for my boldness; and I thought, Dick, that—that—that—this person wished to speak only to *me*." She hesitated.

"Go on," said Dick, in a voice that had also undergone a singular change.

The chestnut head was bent a little lower, as the young girl nervously twisted her fingers in her lap.

"Then I saw him again—and—again," she went on hesitatingly. "Of course I spoke to him, to—to—find out what he wanted; but you know, Dick, I cannot speak Spanish, and of course he didn't understand me, and didn't reply."

"But his manner, his appearance, gave you some idea of his meaning?" said Dick suddenly.

Cecily's head drooped a little lower. "I thought—that is, I fancied I knew what he meant."

"No doubt," said Dick, in a voice which, but for the superstitious horror of the situation, might have impressed a casual listener as indicating a trace of human irony.

But Cecily did not seem to notice it. "Perhaps I was excited that night, perhaps I was bolder because I knew you were near me, but I went up to him and touched him! And then, Dick!—oh, Dick! think how awful——"

Again Dick felt the thrill of superstitious terror creep over him. "And he vanished!" he said hoarsely.

"No—not at once," stammered Cecily, with her head almost buried in her lap; "for he—he—he took me in his arms and——"

"And kissed you?" said Dick, springing to his feet, with every trace of his superstitious agony gone from his indignant face. But Cecily, without raising her head, caught at his gesticulating hand.

"Oh, Dick, Dick! do you think he really did it? The horror of it, Dick! to be kissed by a—a—man who has been dead a hundred years!"

"A hundred fiddlesticks!" said Dick furiously. "We have been deceived! No," he stammered, "I mean *you* have been deceived—insulted!"

"Hush! Aunty will hear you," murmured the girl despairingly.

Dick, who had thrown away his cousin's hand, caught it again, and dragged her along the aisle of light to the window. The moon shone upon his flushed and angry face.

"Their first kiss"

"Listen!" he said "you have been fooled, tricked — infamously tricked by these people, and some confederate, whom —whom I shall horsewhip if I catch. The whole story is a lie!"

"But you looked as if you believed it—about the girl," said Cecily, "you acted so strangely. I even thought, Dick —sometimes—you had seen *him*."

Dick shuddered, trembled; but it is to be feared that the lower, more natural human element in him triumphed.

"Nonsense!" he stammered; "the girl was a foolish *farrago* of absurdities, improbable on the face of things, and impossible to prove. But that infernal, sneaking rascal was flesh and blood."

It seemed to him to relieve the situation and establish his own sanity to combat one illusion with another. Cecily had already been deceived — another lie wouldn't hurt her. But, strangely enough, he was satisfied that Cecily's visitant was real, although he still had doubts about his own.

"Then you think, Dick, it was actually some real man?" she said piteously. "Oh, Dick, I have been so foolish!"

Foolish she no doubt had been; pretty she certainly was, sitting there in her loosened hair, and pathetic, appealing earnestness. Surely the ghostly Rosita's glances were never so pleading as these actual honest eyes behind their curving lashes. Dick felt a strange, new-born sympathy of suffering, mingled tantalisingly with a new doubt and jealousy, that was human and stimulating.

"Oh, Dick, what are *we* to do?"

The plural struck him as deliciously sweet and subtle. Had they really been singled out for this strange experience, or still stranger hallucination? His arm crept around her, she gently withdrew from it.

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"I must go now," she murmured; "but I couldn't sleep until I told you all. You know, Dick, I have no one else to come to, and it seemed to me that *you* ought to know it first. I feel better for telling you. You will tell me to-morrow what you think we ought to do."

They reached the door, opening it softly. She lingered for a moment on the threshold.

"Tell me, Dick" (she hesitated); "if that—that really were a spirit, and not a real man,—you don't think that—that kiss" (she shuddered) "could do me harm?"

He shuddered too, with a strange and sympathetic consciousness that, happily, she did not even suspect. But he quickly recovered himself, and said, with something of bitterness in his voice, "I should be more afraid if it really were a man."

"Oh, thank you, Dick!"

Her lips parted in a smile of relief, the colour came faintly back to her cheek.

A wild thought crossed his fancy that seemed an inspiration. They would share the risks alike. He leaned towards her: their lips met in their first kiss.

"Oh, Dick!"

"Dearest!"

"I think—we are saved."

"Why?"

"It wasn't at all like that"

He smiled as she flew swiftly down the corridor. Perhaps he thought so too.

* * * * * *

No picture of the alleged Rosita was ever found. Doña Felipa, when the story was again referred to, smiled discreetly, but was apparently too preoccupied with the return of Don José's absent nephew for further gossiping visits to the Hacienda, and Dick and Cecily, as Mr. and Mrs. Bracy, would seem to have survived—if they never really solved—the mystery of the Hacienda de los Osos. Yet in the month of June, when the moon is high, one does not sit on the stone bench in the rose garden after the last stroke of the Angelus.

BRET HARTE.

THE LAST STORY OF THE LATE M GUY DE MAUPASSANT*

A PSYCHICAL PHENOMENON

TABLE-TURNING AND BRAIN-TURNING.

Poor Guy de Maupassant! The rumours as to the bodily and mental condition of this unhappy author, which had latterly caused the gravest apprehensions to all his friends, have proved too true. A contemporary French journal has lately quoted a fragment of one of his last pieces, in which it is thought that, possibly, the first approach of the mental disease which has attacked the eminent writer may have been indicated. It is entitled.—

PART I.

OH my God! my God! I am about to describe how it is that I am here! But can I possibly do so? Shall I dare to write it down? It is so inexplicable, incomprehensible, so strange—in fact, so mad! If I could only *not* be sure of that which I have seen! If I could only be assured that there was *some* failure in my sense of reasoning, some error in my facts, something missing in the inflexible chain of my observations, then I could believe that it was a simple hallucination, the phantasmagoria of a strange dream After all, who knows?

* M Ludovic Halevy has applied to M Guy de Maupassant the saying of Vauvenargues *"La netteté est le vernis des maîtres"* Guy de Maupassant, the brilliant disciple of Flaubert, died on July 6th, 1893.

I am to-day in an asylum, but I am here voluntarily, for the sake of prudence, and from fear! Only one person knows my story—the doctor in charge of the establishment. I am going to write this for him. I do not know why. To relieve my feelings perhaps, for I feel as though oppressed by a grievous nightmare. It happened thus.

I have always been a recluse, a dreamer, a sort of unsociable philosopher, good-natured, contented with little, bearing no ill-will towards my fellow-men, and no bitterness of spirit towards heaven. I have lived alone by choice, in consequence of a restless irritability which I experience from the continued presence of other people. How is this to be explained? I cannot do so. I do not mind meeting people, talking or dining with my friends; but when they have been some time with me, even my most intimate friends, they bore me, fatigue and enervate me, and I experience a growing and harassing eagerness to see them go off and leave me alone. This anxiety is more than a want,—it is an irresistible necessity; and if the presence of any people who are with me were to continue, and if I had not only to listen but to keep up a conversation with them too long, then some catastrophe would ensue. What? Ah! that I can't say. Who can tell? It might be a dead faint—or a fit—yes, probably!

I like so much being alone, that I cannot even bear other people sleeping under the same roof with me. I cannot live in Paris because I suffer there an indefinable agony, and undergo grinding torments in body and soul, and torture in my nerves, by the mere vicinity of that immense multitude which swarms, which lives around me, even when it sleeps. Ah! the sleep of others is even more painful to me than their voice. Indeed, I can never compose myself to sleep when I know, when I feel that behind the walls so many living beings have their existence temporarily blotted out by the diurnal cessation of their reason.

Wherefore am I like this? Who knows? The cause of it is possibly very simple. I am readily tired out by everything which has to do with other people, and there are many others who suffer like myself.

There are two different races of people in the world. Those who need others, whom others distract, amuse, occupy and comfort, and whom solitude annoys, oppresses and stifles, as if ascending a glacier or travelling in a desert; and again there are those whom, on the contrary, the presence of others discomposes, worries, provokes and irritates, whilst solitude calms them, and, as it were, bathes them with repose in the independence and fantasy of their own thoughts.

In fact, we have here a normal psychical phenomenon. Some are endowed with a capacity for a life outside of themselves, the others for a life altogether within themselves. As for myself, my attention to external affairs is quickly extinguished, and when I have reached the limit of patience I experience through my whole body as well as in my mind an intolerable prostration.

It results from this that I attach myself, that I am particularly attached, to inanimate objects, which to me assume all the importance of living beings; and that my house has become, or rather had become, a world wherein I lived a life solitary, yet active, in the midst of things, furniture, ornaments, as familiar and sympathetic in my eyes as faces. I had filled it by degrees, and arranged it until I felt myself content, satisfied and happy when settled in it.

I had built this house in a spacious garden, which served to isolate it from the roads, and at a short distance outside a town where I could obtain, on occasion, the resources of society, whenever I felt the inclination. All my servants lodged in a building separated at the end of the kitchen garden, surrounded by a high wall, and the dark surroundings at night, in the silence of my dwelling, hidden and

overshadowed by the branches of large trees, were so restful and so delightful that I sometimes delayed going to bed for several hours for the sake of enjoying myself longer.

One day, however, the play *Sigurd* happened to be performed at the theatre of the town. It was the first time that I had heard that beautiful drama, with its musical and fairylike scenes, and I was delighted with the performance.

I walked back at a lively pace, my head full of the sonorous periods I had heard, and my brain haunted by the lovely scenes I had just witnessed. It was quite dark —indeed, uncommonly dark—so pitch dark, in fact, that I could barely make out the broad high road in front of me, and once or twice I hardly escaped stumbling into the ditches by the side. From the *octroi* station to my gates was not quite a mile—that is, an easy walk of some twenty minutes. It was then between one o'clock in the morning and half-past that hour; the sky soon cleared a bit before me, and the lunar crescent peeped out from behind the clouds—that sad crescent of the last quarter of the moon. The crescent of the new moon, that which rises at four or five o'clock in the evening,* is clear, bright and silvery; but that which rises after midnight is red, sinister and disquieting; it is the true crescent of the witches' Sabbath: all night-walkers must have remarked the contrast. The first, even when it is as narrow as a silver thread, projects a cheery ray, which rejoices the heart, and casts on the ground sharply defined shadows; while the latter reflects only a mournful glow, so wan that the shadows are bleared and indistinct.

I now distinguished some way off the dark outline of my garden trees, and, at the same time, an indefinable sort of dislike to go in, I know not how, seemed to come over me. Instinctively I slackened my pace, for it was soft and mild, and the dense shade of the trees assumed a sepulchral air, as though the building was enveloped in a tomb. I opened my gate mechanically, and entered under the long avenue of sycamores, which led up to the house, arched over like a vaulted tunnel, passing through their gloom and around the grass lawn and flower-beds, whose oval forms glimmered like light patches on the darker sward.

Approaching nearer to my house, a strange apprehension seized me. I stopped: nothing was to be heard—not a breath of air stirred a leaf of the trees. "What on earth can it be?" said I to myself. For the past ten years I had returned home like this, without ever experiencing any such feeling of distrust. I was not in the least afraid of anything. I had never felt any fear at night, or in the dark. The sight of a man, a burglar or thief, would have excited my rage, and I should have gone for him without a moment's hesitation. Besides, I was armed, and had my revolver in my pocket; but it did not even occur to me to produce it,—I rather braced myself to resist this absurd and unaccountable feeling of nervousness which grew within me in spite of myself. And why? Who knows? What could it be? A presentiment? The mysterious presentiment which overcomes the cooler senses of men when they meet unawares with something wholly inexplicable? Perhaps! Who knows? As I got closer to the house I could not prevent a cold shivering creeping over my skin, and I could not repress a shudder when I came near to the closed shutters of the tall windows. I felt that I must wait a few minutes before opening the front door, and seated myself on a bench under the windows of my drawing-room. There I remained, rather shaky, my head leaning against the wall, my eyes turned towards the shadow of the foliage. During these first instants I remarked nothing out of the common. I had a slight humming in my ears; but that was not unusual. It

* N.B.—The author's generally acute observation is surely rather at fault here, for the new moon sets close after the sun, and does not rise at that time of the afternoon or evening; he must mean "which becomes visible" at that hour.

"I crouched, and watched this procession of my furniture."

seemed, however, as if I heard occasionally the train passing, and heard bells tinkling, and a crowd of people marching along. Then soon these rumblings became more distinct, more precise and more recognisable. I was deceived. It was not the habitual buzzing of my arteries which caused these sounds in my ears, but a most peculiar noise—very confused, however—which came, without any doubt whatever, from the inside of my house.

I could distinguish through the walls this continued noise, rather a commotion than a noise, a vague stirring of a lot of things, as if all my furniture was being shaken, displaced and gently dragged. Well, for some considerable time I doubted the sureness of my ear. But having placed it against a shutter, the better to listen to this strange disturbance of my dwelling, I became convinced, certain that something abnormal and incomprehensible was going on within it. I was not afraid, but I was—how can I explain it?—scared with astonishment. I did not attempt to draw my revolver—divining instinctively that it could be of no use. I waited awhile. I paused some time, unable to decide what to do, with all my wits about me, clear-headed enough, but foolishly nervous. So I waited on outside, listening, and always hearing this noise, which increased, and which attained every moment violent intensity, which seemed to become a rumbling of impatience, of anger, and of mysterious tumult. Then suddenly, ashamed of my cowardice, I took out my bunch of keys, and taking the latch-key, put it in the lock, twice turned it, and, pushing the door back with all my force, I slammed the leaf of the door up against the partition.

This slamming of the door sounded like the report of a gun; and to the noise of this explosion there re-echoed, from the top to the bottom of my house, a formidable tumult. This was so sudden, so terrible, so deafening, that I recoiled some few steps, and, although recognising its uselessness, I handled my revolver. Again I waited—oh, but for a brief interval! I presently distinguished an extraordinary shuffling and stamping of feet on the staircase, on the floors, on the carpets; a sound not only of boots and human shoes, but tapping of crutches, of crutches of wood, and knocking of iron crutches which clanged like cymbals. And behold, I perceived, all at once, on the door sill, an armchair, my large reading chair, which came waddling out. Right into the garden it went, followed by others, the chairs of my drawing-room, then the comfortable settee, crawling like crocodiles on their short legs; next, all my chairs bounding like goats, and the small footstools which followed like rabbits.

Oh, what a hideous surprise! I stepped back behind the shrubs, where I stayed, crouched and watching this procession of my furniture, for out they all came, one behind the other, quickly or slowly according to their form and weight. My piano—my large grand piano—passed at a canter like a horse, with a faint murmur of music from within; the smallest objects crawled on the gravel like ants—brushes, glasses and cups glistening in the rays of the moon with phosphorescence like glowworms. The curtains, table-cloths and draperies wriggled along, with their feelers in the puddles like the cuttle-fish in the sea. Suddenly I beheld my pet bureau, a rare specimen of the last century, and which contained all my correspondence, all my love-letters, the whole history of my heart, an old history of how much I have suffered! And within, besides, were, above all, certain photographs!

This seemed to revive my courage. I no longer felt any fear. I sprang upon my bureau and seized it as I would have seized a thief, as one seizes a wife who flies; but it went on its irresistible course, and, in spite of my efforts and in spite of my anger, I could not in the least delay its onward march. As I resisted in utter desperation this overpowering force, I was thrown to the ground in struggling with it. Then it rolled me over, dragged me along the ground, and immediately

the pieces of furniture which followed it began walking over me, trampling my legs and bruising them. Then, when I had let it go, the others passed over my body like a charge of cavalry over a dismounted soldier.

Mad with terror, at last I was able to drag myself out of the carriage drive and hide myself anew behind the trees, only to behold the very smallest objects, the most insignificant and unknown to me, all that belonged to me, disappear in the darkness. Then I heard, far off, in my house, now echoing as empty houses do, a loud noise of doors slammed. They banged from top to bottom of the dwelling, until that of the hall which I had opened myself—fool that I was—closed itself last of all.

I also took flight, running towards the town, and only regained my composure when on entering the streets I met a few belated passengers. I went and rang the bell of an hotel where I was known. I had brushed my clothes with my hands, to shake off the dust, and I recollected that I had lost my bunch of keys, which included that of the kitchen garden, where my servants slept in a separate lodge, behind the garden walls which preserved my vegetables and fruit from the visits of pilferers.

"A great calamity happened during the night."

I covered myself up to the eyes in the bed which was allotted to me. But I could not sleep, and I awaited daylight with a beating heart. I had ordered that my servants should be called at daybreak, and my valet knocked at my door at seven o'clock in the morning.

His face showed how thoroughly upset he was.

"A great calamity happened during the night, sir," said he.

"What, then?"

"All monsieur's furniture has been stolen—all! everything, every single scrap, all is gone."

This news pleased me. Why? Who knows? I was quite master of myself, determined to feign ignorance, and not to say a word of what I had seen to a soul, to hide it, bury it in my conscience as a frightful secret. I answered:

"Then it must be the same people who have stolen my keys. It will be necessary instantly to give notice to the police. I will get up and be down with you in a few minutes."

The inquiry lasted five months. Nothing could be discovered, not the smallest knickknack could be found, not the slightest trace of the thieves. By God! If I had told all that I knew —— If I had breathed it to any one, they would have had

me shut up—not the thieves, but the man who had been able to witness such a thing. Oh, I knew how to keep silence! But I did not refurnish my house—that was quite useless. It would only happen all over again. I did not care to re-enter it. I did not enter it—I never went back there at all.

I came to Paris, at the hotel, and I consulted some doctors on my nervous state, which was utterly shaken by the events of that dreadful night

They advised my going abroad. I followed their counsel.

PART II.

I BEGAN by a trip into Italy. The sunshine did me a great deal of good. For six months I wandered from Genoa to Venice, from Venice to Florence, from Florence to Rome, from Rome to Naples. I ran over to Sicily, a country so interesting in its scenery and ancient monuments, the relics left by the Greeks and the Romans. Thence I passed into Africa; I journeyed tranquilly over the great desert—yellow and calm, where wander camels, gazelles and vagabond Arabs, where, under the light and transparent air, no intercourse with fellow-men disturbs one either by night or day.

I came back to France by Marseilles, where, in spite of the Provençal gaiety, the diminished luminosity of the skies dispirited me. I again felt, on returning to the Continent, a strange return of the illness which I fancied had been cured, and I perceived that a deep melancholy warned me that the seat of the disease had not been eradicated. Soon I returned to Paris. At the end of a month I was bored. It was now autumn, and I made up my mind to make, before winter set in, an excursion across Normandy, a country with which I was not acquainted. It must be borne in mind that I began with Rouen, and for a week I wandered about distracted, enthusiastic with admiration, in that picturesque town of the Middle Ages, in that veritable museum of extraordinary Gothic monuments.

Well, one afternoon, somewhere about four o'clock, as I happened to be passing down an out-of-the-way by-street, in the middle of which flowed a deep river, black as ink, named the *Eau de Robec*, my attention, wholly directed to examining the bizarre and antique physiognomy of the houses, was all of a sudden attracted by the sight of a series of shops of furniture brokers, one after the other, from door to door along the street. Ah! these second-hand brokers had well chosen their locality, these sordid traffickers of old *bric-à-brac*, in this fantastic alley leading up from the stream of that sinister dark water, under the steep pointed overhanging gables of tiled roofs and projecting shingle eaves, where the weathercocks of the past still creaked overhead.

In the depths of these dark shops could be seen piled up, carved chests, china-ware from Rouen, from Nevers, from Moustiers, painted statues, others in oak, Christs, Virgins, Saints, church ornaments, chasubles, copes, even sacred vessels, and one particular old tabernacle in gilt wood. Oh, the singular dens in these tall houses, in these huge buildings, full of cellars, containing warehouses of all sorts of objects, whose existence seemed to have come to an end, and who had long survived their original possessors!

My fancy for knick-knacks was able to revel in this city of antiquaries. I went from shop to shop, crossing in a couple of strides the bridges of four rotten planks, thrown at intervals over the noisome Eau de Robec.

Mercy! God have mercy on me! What a terrible shock! One of my most beautiful armoires appeared to me at the opening of a vault crowded with all sorts of rubbish, and which seemed like an entrance to the catacombs of a cemetery of ancient furniture. I approached trembling in all my limbs, trembling to such a

"One of my most beautiful armoires appeared to me at the opening of a vault."

degree that I dared not touch it. I put out my hand; I hesitated: it was indeed what I thought—a unique armoire of Louis XIII, recognisable by any one who had ever once seen it. Casting instantly my eyes further inside, within the darker depths of this gallery I perceived three of my armchairs covered with tapestry *au petit point*, next, farther on, my two Henri II. tables, so rare that people would come from Paris to see them. Think, only think, of the state of my mind!

I still went on, powerless, staggered with painful emotion, but on I went, for I am brave, and I advanced as a cavalier of the dark ages penetrates into a den of sorceries. I re-found, step by step, all that had belonged to me—my chandeliers, my books, my tables, my curtains, my armour—all except the bureau full of my letters, and that I could not perceive. On I went, descending to obscure passages, to mount again farther on to upper stories. I was quite alone, I called out, but there was no answer. I was all alone,—there was not a soul in this vast house, as tortuous as a labyrinth.

Night came, and I had to sit down in the dusk on one of my own chairs, for I did not wish to go away. From time to time I cried out, "Holloa! holloa! Some one! Here!" I had been there certainly more than an hour when I heard steps, light footsteps, soft, I knew not where. I had nearly saved myself by flight, but bracing myself together I called out afresh, and I perceived a light in the next room.

"Who is there?" said a voice.

I replied, "A customer."

The voice answered, "It is very late to come thus into the shops."

I rejoined, "I have been waiting for you more than an hour."

"You can come back to-morrow."

"To-morrow I shall have left Rouen."

I dared not advance, and he did not come forward. I saw all this time the glimmer of his light illuminating a tapestry where two angels hovered above the dead bodies on a field of battle. This also belonged to me. I said, "Well, there? will you come?"

He replied, "I am waiting for you!"

I got up and went towards him.

In the middle of a large room was a very small man, quite little and very fat, phenomenally stout—a hideous phenomenon.

He had a sparse beard of ragged, scattered tawny hair, and not a hair on his head, not a single hair! As he held his candle lifted at arm's length above him to see me, his bald pate appeared to me like a little moon in that huge dark room encumbered with old pieces of furniture. His face was wrinkled and puffy, so that his eyes were almost imperceptible.

I purchased three things which were mine, and paid for them on the spot, a large amount, giving him simply the number of my room at the hotel. They were to be delivered the following day before nine o'clock. Then I went out. He conducted me to his door with much politeness.

I instantly betook myself to the central police station, and related to the superintendent commissioner the robbery of my furniture and the discovery of it which I had just made.

He at once telegraphed off for full information of particulars of the theft to the office which had been charged with the prosecution of the business, and requested me to await for an answer. An hour later the required information confirming my statement duly reached him.

"A very small man ... a hideous phenomenon"

"I am going to arrest this man and examine him at once," he told me; "for he might become suspicious and get rid of the furniture which belongs to you. If you will go and have your dinner and return in a couple of hours, I shall have him here, and will submit him to a fresh examination in your presence."

"Most willingly, sir! I thank you most sincerely."

I went off to dine at my hotel, and ate better than I could have believed possible. I felt reassured and contented. They would catch him. Two hours later I went back to the police official who was expecting me.

"Well, sir," he said, on seeing me, "they have not found your man. My officers have been unable to lay hold of him."

"Ah!" I felt ready to faint.

"But—— You've found his house all right, have you not?" I asked.

"Most certainly—and it will be watched and guarded until his return. As for him, he has disappeared."

"Disappeared?"

"Disappeared! He generally passes his evenings with his neighbour, a woman, also a broker, a funny old sorceress, Widow Bidoin. She has not seen him this evening, and could not give any information about him. We must wait for to-morrow."

I departed. Ah! but how sinister disquieting and haunted the streets of Rouen now seemed to me!

I slept, oh, so badly! troubled by nightmares at each interval of sleep. As I did not wish to appear too uneasy or flurried, I waited till ten o'clock the next morning before going to the police office. The broker had not reappeared. His shop remained shut up. The commissary said to me:

"I have made all the necessary dispositions. The staff is instructed how to act. We are now going together to this shop to break it open; you will then be able to point out all that belongs to you."

A carriage conveyed us there. The policemen were stationed with a locksmith before the door of the shop, which was now opened. On entering, I could see neither my armoire nor my chairs, nor my tables, nor anything—nothing of all that had furnished my house, nothing!—although the previous evening I could not take a step without encountering one of my articles.

The head official, surprised, regarded me with distrust.

"Upon my word, sir!" I said to him, "the disappearance of these bits of furniture coincidea wonderfully with that of the broker."

He smiled.

"That's true! You were wrong to purchase and pay for the articles belonging to you yesterday. That gave him the alarm."

I replied, "What appears to me so incomprehensible is that all the places formerly occupied by my furniture are now filled with other things."

"Oh," responded the commissary, "he has had all the night, and probably several accomplices. This house may possibly communicate with the neighbouring ones. Never fear, sir! I shall follow up this business very actively. The robber will not long escape us since we hold his den."

Ah! Alas, my heart! my poor heart! How it was beating!

I stayed a fortnight longer at Rouen. The man did not return. By God! That man there,—who is there who could surprise or seize him?

On the sixteenth day, in the morning, I received from my gardener, the caretaker of my house which had been robbed and was still empty, the following strange letter:—

"SIR,—

"I have the honour to inform you that something happened last night which no person can understand, the police no more than ourselves. All the furniture has come back—all, without exception—all, even to the smallest objects. The house has again become exactly what it was like on the evening of the theft. It is enough to make one lose his head. This was done in the night of Friday to Saturday. The carriage drive is torn up and indented, as if everything had been dragged from the gateway to the door, just as it was on the morning after the furniture disappeared.

"We await your coming, and I am,

"Sir, your most obedient servant,

"RAUDIN PHILIPPE"

Ah! Not I. Ah! No, never shall I return there. I took the letter to the Police Commissioner of Rouen.

"It is a very clever restoration," said he—"very clever. We'll be low. We'll catch out that man one of these days."

But they have never caught him. No, they have never caught him; and meantime I am dreadfully afraid of him, as if he were a wild beast let loose behind me.

Undiscoverable! He will never be found, this monster with the moonlike head. He can never be caught. He will never return to his house. What does he care for that? It is only I who can meet him, and I do not care to do that.

I do not want! I don't want! I don't want ever to meet him. And if he should come back, should return to his shop, who will be able to prove that my furniture was there in it? He has nothing against him except my testimony, and I well know that it is mistrusted!

Ah, but no! An existence like this is no longer possible. I should be unable any more to keep the secret of what I had seen. I should no longer be able to live like every one else, with the fear lest similar things could again happen.

I have come to find the doctor who directs this establishment, and I have told him the whole story.

After having questioned me for a long time, he said to me, "Will you consent, sir, to remain some time here?"

"Very willingly, sir."

"You have means?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would you like a separate lodging?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would you like to receive any friends?"

"No, sir, not a soul. The man of Rouen might dare, out of vengeance, to pursue me here."

And I am alone, alone, quite alone for the last three months. I am tranquil, or nearly so. I have but one fear—lest the dealer in antiquities might become mad and lest he should be brought to this asylum. The very prisons themselves could not contain him safely.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

Translated by S. PASFIELD OLIVER.

The Haunted Oak of Nannau

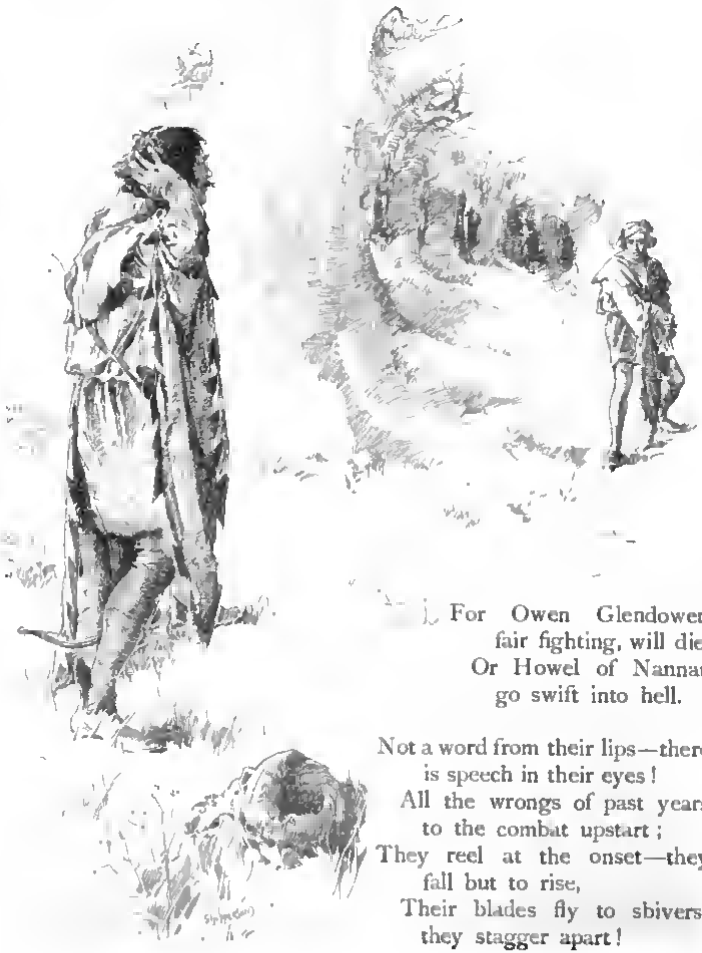
THE Abbot sat high in his raftered hall,
The monks of old Vanner they made good cheer;
To-morrow, to-morrow, whatever befall,
Will Owen Glendower go hunting the deer.
Right merry goes forward the feasting hour,
And Mawddach merrily murmurs near,
But Owen Glendower, his brows still lower,
And Howel of Nannau keeps hold of his spear.

The harpers up in the gallery played
  Till the song, like wine, through the heart's blood ran:
They sang of the joyaunce that peace had made,
  And the sorrow of war since the feud began;
Loud, loud was the laughter and clatter of plate,
  The clanking of trencher and clinking of can,
As they cursed the devil that caused the hate,
  And blessed the good hunt that had broken the ban.

The stars had scarce faded, the hounds were away,
The herons of Hengwrt with clamour awoke,
But the sun cannot shine o'er the shallows to-day,
The shoulders of Idris with clouds are a-smoke;
There are sounds in the branches and sighs in the air,
And hoarsely the ravens far over them croak,
Glendower's dark eyes, they are restless with care,
And Howel rides on, but no word has he spoke.

"Now halt ye," cries Howel, "my merry men, here,
Keep the horses in shelter, the hounds by the wall;
Glendower and I will go follow the deer,—
At need, through the woodland, our bugles shall call."
They are lost in the forest, and up springs a doe
And dances snow-white through the bracken fern tall:
"Shoot, Howel! yon beauty shall count to thy bow,
They shall bless thee who feast with the Abbot in hall."

There's a twang like a harp-string that breaks, and the sound
Of a bolt, on a breastplate that harmlessly fell;
Glendower, escaped from a treacherous wound,
Has turned on his murd'rer full face in the dell.
Though the bolt of his vengeance may err as it fly,
There's a sword at his girdle shall yet serve him well;



For Owen Glendower,
fair fighting, will die,
Or Howel of Nannau
go swift into hell.

Not a word from their lips—there
is speech in their eyes!
All the wrongs of past years
to the combat upstart;
They reel at the onset—they
fall but to rise,
Their blades fly to shivers,
they stagger apart!

Then Owen Glendower went back for a pace,—
A bull in his fury, a fox in his art,—
Sped off, followed hard, sprang aside in the race,
And Howel of Nannau sank stabbed to the heart!

Now haste thee, Glendower, for red is thy hand,
And Howel's brave riders are under the lea;
Long as priest by the altar in Vanner shall stand,
No shriving of soul for thy clansman or thee.
Though the curlew may call, and the raven may croak,
No tongue shall cry murder when eyes cannot see;
For a coffin, hard by thee, stands hollow the oak,—
Hide the heart thou hast hushed in the heart of a tree!

With the strength of a giant he shouldered the corse,
Climbed up to the rent the fierce lightning had made,
There flung him, feet forward, with pitiless force,
And cast in the hollow his bow and his blade.
"False traitor!" he cried, "though the oak may keep well
Thy bones and thy deed of dark shame in the glade,
It shall groan with thy groans of remorse down in hell
Till the ghost, made in Nannau this morn, shall be laid."

For centuries four, from the oak on the hill
  Came the sounds of the moaning of men when they die,
And the woodpecker stopped as he tapped with his bill,
  And the jay with a scream from its branches would fly;
All the deer in the forest went scampering past,
  The hound to its groaning would utter a cry,
The huntsman who heard it, he galloped more fast,
  And the stout-hearted woodsman sped silently by,

But the tree kept the secret shut up in its heart,
Till a wind from the west, at the fall of the year,
Plucked the roots from the ground, tore the great trunk apart,
And cast from its bosom the load of its fear;
And there, with his bones bleached to white as he stood,
With the dirk through his ribs and the dagger-wound clear,
Was Howel of Nannau, who died in the wood
When Owen Glendower went hunting the deer.

H. D. Rawnsley.

Note.—*Howel Sele (pronounced "Seeley"), of Nannau in Merionethshire, first cousin to Owen Glendower, had long been at variance with Owen. The Abbot of Cymmer, or Vanner (the Cistercian Monastery, founded 1187, whose ruined Chapel and Banquet Hall may still be seen on the banks of the Mawddach, opposite Llanelltydd), in hopes of reconciling them, brought them together at a banquet, and a Hunting Party was arranged for the next day. While they were out in the Nannau woods, Owen Glendower espied a doe, and bade Howel Sele shoot it, he being the first marksman of the day. Howel pretending to aim at the doe, suddenly turned and discharged the arrow full at the breast of Glendower, who, however, fortunately had armour beneath his clothes, and so received no hurt. Enraged at his treachery, the story goes that Glendower discharged his own arrow at Sele, and, missing him, closed and fought hand to hand with him, slew him, and cast his body into a huge hollow oak. At the beginning of this century, the oak was said to be twenty-seven feet and a half in circumference. It fell in a storm on July 13th, 1813. Before it fell, a skeleton, supposed to be that of Howel Sele, was found concealed within it. For years after the tragedy of the hunting day, it was said that groans were heard proceeding from the oak, which was called "Cenbren yr E yll," or "The Haunted Oak." The legend is referred to by Sir Walter Scott in his "Marmion," Canto VI., footnote to "The Spirit's Blasted Tree." The chief authority for the tale in its present form is the account given in Pennant's "Tour in Wales."*

RESTING awhile on a low bridge on the outskirts of the town, I shook the white dust from my shoes, and fell to joyfully pondering a plan of procedure

First, I would hie me to the Poste Restante, there to secure my remittance (which should have been awaiting my coming a week or more); next, I would hasten to the Hôtel de France and forthwith order, *à la carte* (notwithstanding a remonstrance from Monsieur Baedeker—that thrifty gentleman—against the high prices of that hostelry), a regal dinner. Finally, while that was a preparing, I would set to work upon a sketch within the famous street which I had trudged so many kilomètres to admire.

An unshaven, suspicious clerk at the Poste Restante, however, took a different view of the matter, and averred, with villainous pronouncement of my patronymic, that no letter at all awaited me.

"Je suis perdu," thought I, for I had but a franc in pocket, together with my return ticket to England due on the morrow; and, mightily chap-fallen, I rounded the corner into the street of fame. 'Twas indeed a sweet harbour of antiquity, safe in the shelter of the bulging roofs from wind and rain; yet on the sudden it had scarce a charm for me.

The crooked curve of the old wayfare, bordered with irregular, brown-timbered houses, was quaint as a dream; the sunset swung like a golden gate at the end of the alley, the breeze bore soft Breton voices on its current, uplifting an old refrain:

> "Ce sont les matelots— pon pon pon pon,
> De la belle Eugenie—pon pon pon pon."

For once in a lifetime fact and fancy dovetailed; yet for the life of me I could not put brush to canvas, so heavy weighed my disappointment.

Squatting upon the sill of an ancient warehouse, I lit a cigarette and commenced to take stock of my position.

'Twas not so desperate after all, I reflected. The weather was superlative; for a night's lodging I could lie in the orchard hard by the river; and as for sustenance I had a sufficiency of tobacco, a stick or two of chocolate, and a franc in pocket. Forty centimes for coffee and a roll to-night, forty centimes for the like to-morrow, with the remainder laid out upon a fresh supply of chocolate for the journey, and I could surely make shift to win home on the morrow without mishap to my person. Upon further reflection I even grew to perceive (for I was but two-and-twenty) that my predicament was not only romantic, but enjoyable, and at the close of my cigarette I would not have changed places with the best-housed traveller on the Continent.

I rose and stretched myself. Weariness seemingly had dropped from my limbs, and I was ready to note the quaint and antique points of the buildings around me.

Right opposite stood a house-front rich in sixteenth-century mouldings and heavy with carvings: here, from a finial, leered a jester; there, on the window jamb, a pensive nun hid her head; a row of baboons grinned evilly from the corbel table above, and all along the under beams ran weird sculpture of man and beast.

Finally, a scutcheon beneath the central window caught my eye, it appeared somewhat defaced on the sinister side, but enough remained to have enabled a good herald to decipher the rank and quality of the ancient owner.

Three escallop shells in chief, thought I, as I continued to look at the shield with interest, endeavouring to stumble through a blazon: the family was probably noble then, and had gone on pilgrimage, ran my comment; and presumably of fighting stock, for in one of the quarterings appeared a lion rampant-guardant, and in another three lances.

Above all was a shield of pretence: the seigneur married an heiress, then, I reflected, approving his wisdom. A charge was borne upon the shield, and to my exceeding surprise it was clearly nothing less than a demi-lion gorged with a collar of France. Now, I was no great antiquary, but to one who was not wholly unacquainted with ancient heraldry the matter was strange enough, for my own family bore upon their shield, and above all, as an augmentation of honour, a like escutcheon charged with a precisely similar emblem.

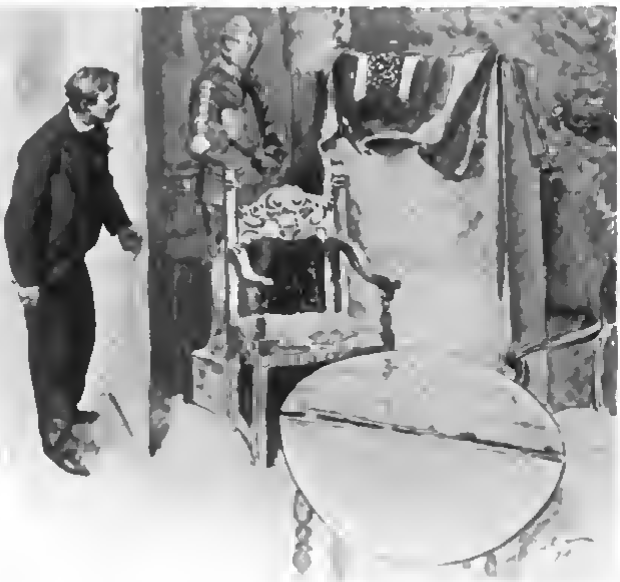
Again, about the granting of this same augmentation hung an interesting story to this effect. When François I. was king, and fruitlessly wooed our Henry's friendship at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, it so happened that amongst countless other amusements a tourney was held, in which an ancestor of mine greatly distinguished himself. He, indeed, after having held the field in all encounters, ran a final tilt against a Monsieur de Beauclere (an accomplished young cavalier of the King's household), whom in the second shock he bore headlong to the ground, so strong had been his arm, so unerring his aim. When they lifted his vizor the young cavalier was dead: it appeared his neck had been broken either in the shock of the encounter or in his fall; and though it was but the mischance of the *melee*, some of his relatives, 'twas said, had taken it so much to heart that my ancestor had but narrowly escaped assassination shortly afterwards. Francis, however, whether he thought to please Henry thereby, or it may be because he took delight in feats of arms, granted "out of merit" to the victor, and Henry confirmed the same, the escutcheon from the other's shield, to be borne as an augmentation of honour in memory of his prowess.

As this honour was of course hereditary, my family had continued ever since to bear it on their coat-of-arms, and oftentimes had I listened inattentively to the history of its achievement from my father, who was continually used to lament the decline of the heraldic art.

Now, however, I felt genuinely interested, for the house in front of me had probably belonged to the family of the young cavalier.

Possibly he himself had lived here before he became attached to the court; perhaps he had been carried hither after death to his sorrowing relatives; and I fell to wondering whether there were any memorials within which might serve as a clue to further knowledge. The habitation seemed now to serve the turn of a dealer in antiquities, for sundry ancient brocades appeared in the window, accompanied by the usual assortment of rusty pistols and damaged clocks.

No one was about, the shop was empty, so I determined to step within and investigate somewhat further.



"A garret in which dilapidated furniture was stored"

The dealer in antiquities, I reflected, has ever an itch to display his wares, and in the present state of my finances even a bandit in person had no terrors for me

The house within was as ancient as without; the same quaint taste in carving and decoration was everywhere displayed on central ceiling-beam and wainscoting; the antiquities of the dealer appeared to be the sole modern innovations. A tempting stairway of heavy oak led to the upper apartment, and, emboldened by the reigning solitude, I determined to venture upstairs.

The stairway zigzagged upwards in short lengths of balustraded oak, giving access to the chambers of the various stories. On the first floor, and immediately over the shop, was a wide room filled with heavier articles, such as armoires and bureaus, presumably intended for the serious-minded, heavy-pursed customers whom the lighter relics on the ground-floor would not satisfy.

Above again was a garret in which dilapidated furniture was stored, awaiting, doubtless, the hand of the restorer. There was a genuine look about the promiscuous articles here strewn about that tempted to a closer inspection; and, feeling now quite secure in the uninterrupted solitude of the mansion, I boldly stepped within and commenced a research into this shipwreck of antiquity.

I was down on my knees before an ancient deed-chest, which seemed to bear a like coat-of-arms upon the central panel to that upon the house-front, when, to my intense astonishment, I heard a rustle as of silk apparently just behind me. Facing round with a start, I perceived, sitting close beside me, but somewhat concealed by a tattered brocaded screen, an extraordinarily pale, yet stately-looking individual, clad in the magnificent robe of a cardinal.

I continued to gaze open-mouthed, my astonishment entirely eclipsing my manners, at the figure beside me; for I was filled with amaze as to who he could be, and what he was doing in that strange disguise.

Possibly, I surmised, there had been a festival in the village—some *fête de bienfaisance*, such as I had witnessed before now, wherein the whole population turned out in motley. Presumably, however, the individual before me had at least some connection with the establishment, and 'twere meet that I should apologise for my trespass. I fumbled for words, but the stranger was beforehand with me.

"Good evening, young sir," said he.

"Good evening, your Eminence," I stammered in reply, for such was the dignity of his manner that I had been a boor had I treated him as other than a prince of the Church.

"From the dust upon your shoes I presume that you have travelled far to-day," he continued, in a mellifluous voice, and with so charming a dignity of manner that I momentarily forgot my unwarranted intrusion.

"Yes," I replied, "I have indeed; but, in having found here such interesting memorials of ancient times, I am amply repaid my troubles."

"And may I inquire what particularly interests you?" And herewith he bowed toward me with all the grace in the world.

Gladly I burst forth with the discovery, with which I was full, of the similarity of the two coats-of-arms, and was well under way upon the majestic sea of Sir Bernard Burke when he interrupted me.

"It was said there was foul play on the part of your renowned ancestor, and that it was as disgraceful to Francis to give, as to the victor to accept, this distinction."

He had drawn himself up to a more erect posture in the chair while I had been speaking, and his gaze from idle had become keen as a hawk's; and, though his manner had lost none of its courtesy, I felt instinctively that his whole attitude towards me had changed in some unaccountable fashion.

"They may have said what they pleased," returned I, with some heat, "yet facts speak for themselves, and it is to be noted that he was styled the English Bayard by his contemporaries."

"By his *English* contemporaries?" he interrogated softly; and there was, to my mind, a world of mockery, if not of malice, beneath his velvet tones.

I felt 'twas useless to engage upon a discussion with the strange individual before me, and impossible, after his unwarranted insult to my ancestor, to make any further inquiry into the history (with which he seemed so curiously familiar) of the augmented arms. Add to this that I had suddenly grown painfully conscious that I was cutting a very figure of fun as I still knelt flustered and dishevelled upon the floor, so that it was with some colour to my cheeks that I rose up, prepared to make my bow and instantly depart.

"A pale yet stately-looking individual, clad in the magnificent robe of a Cardinal."

"Stay," interposed the Cardinal, and he waved his hand with an authoritative gesture,—"stay awhile; you are hot and dusty with your journey, and a draught of wine might be agreeable to you: I have some Tokay which emperors before now have found to be not indifferent."

I stood dumfoundered. My first impression, that he was but a shrewd and motley fool, had already had a shock; and now his talk of Tokay and of emperors, and the flash of the magnificent sapphire ring I had just espied on his forefinger, staggered it altogether, so that I had fallen into a complete bewilderment and an absolute incapacity for playing my part in the encounter with any credit.

"M-m-any thanks," I managed to stammer in reply, with a truly bumpkin embarrassment; for there was something strangely imperious in his gaze, and I was altogether taken aback by his offer of hospitality. It was just possible, I reflected, that my host might have escaped from a lunatic asylum, and in that case 'twould be politic to humour him; though I must own that this supposition did not sort any better than the former with either his action or his manners.

He moved forward through the wreckage of lumber, and I followed after, being determined to fall in with his humour and put the best face I could on the matter; for I felt all the time that I owed an apology for my bold intrusion, and it seemed apparent that, whatever else he might be, he was at least the owner of the mansion. Halting beside the wainscoting, he seemed to press some spring or other, for almost instantly there was a creak as of a rusty hinge, a door moved slowly outward, and through the aperture thus formed my host stepped briskly.

Following, without a word, I found myself in a small low-raftered room with an exceedingly musty odour. The door creaked again, and, turning round upon the instant, I perceived myself unexpectedly a prisoner. My host motioned me to an old-fashioned tapestried chair beside the heavy cowled chimneypiece, while he himself had turned to what seemed a small credence behind the arras; for a deep-toned ring, as of ancient rummers, came pleasantly to my ear.

I confess I did not altogether like my situation. I was certainly a prisoner, and my host was surely the strangest figure in the world for a decayed French town in the year of grace 1890. Apart from his magnificent scarlet robes, and the dignity, not to say haughtiness, of his carriage, there was something extraordinary about the man himself; his face was entirely destitute of colour, his figure spare and spent to the last degree, his lips bloodless, and his eyes, of a naturally cold colour, had grown hard and brilliant as diamonds in our recent conversation together. Altogether he had the most distinct personality of any one I had ever come across. The impression I now received, as I watched him at my leisure, was as of an extraordinarily haughty and ambitious nature, that had failed of its purpose, but would not yet brook defeat, for, notwithstanding that arrogant bearing, I thought I had never seen a mournfuller aspect than mine host's. How to reconcile this, however, with the idea that he was but the mummer of a country fête, was altogether beyond my power, so I sat silent and watched the operations of my mysterious entertainer.

His back was turned to me, but in an ancient Venetian mirror that was hung upon the side wall I could see him pouring forth out of an antique flagon a delicious looking liquor of the colour of a saffron rose into a tall rummer of fantastic shape. The rummer was nearly full, when I noticed with a sudden thrill that he had cast with his unoccupied hand, and with extraordinary rapidity, some grains of what seemed a whitish powder into the liquid. An instant after he had turned to me, and, with a princely air, handed me the glass.

I took it falteringly; then, on the instant's inspiration, bowing low, "Will your Eminence not drink with me?" said I: "'twill thus gain an additional flavour."

Slightly bowing in return, he signified assent, and, turning back, filled from the flagon, which he had set upon a stand, another glass of precisely similar workmanship to my own. Then, drawing up a chair to the small table between us, he set down his glass in evident anticipation of my toast.

"'Tis a princely beverage, I dare swear," said I, as I held up the glass to my eye, "and the flagon itself hath a rare look of antiquity"; and with this I nimbly jumped up from my seat, first taking care to set down my rummer as near to his own as possible, and then proceeded to inspect the flagon on the stand with all the coolness in the world.

My outward bravado was scarce a match for a horrible mistrust within, and I felt I was trembling like an aspen, as I seized the flagon and pretended to admire its ancient traceries and heavy waxen seal.

> Hic dies . . .
> Corticem adstrictum pice dimovebit
> Amphoræ fumum bibere institutæ
> Consule Tullo,"

murmured I, in pretended ecstasy, whilst my host said nothing, but marked my antics with a sidelong scrutiny as I, having finished my supposed inspection, set down the flagon and returned to the table once more. Sitting down before it, I stretched out my hand, and, with all the carelessness I could muster, deftly seized, not my own, but my host's rummer.

"To your Eminence's health!" cried I recklessly, and, bowing towards him as I spoke, tossed down the liquor at a gulp.

It was a magnificent wine, truly, and, after I had swallowed it, I felt ready to beard the devil himself.

"You do not drink, Eminence?" I said; and I was scarce surprised at my impudence, so godlike was the liquor.

"I drink to your better manners," quoth he; and the look with which he accompanied the words was full of deadly malice, as he raised the glass and touched it with his lips. We glared at each other a moment across the narrow table; then suddenly he rose, and, walking to the arras, drew forth from within a bowl filled, it appeared to me, with a sort of pastilles.

"The room hath a musty odour," said he; and, striking a light, at once set fire to the contents.

Sitting there, with my legs contentedly outstretched under the table, I watched his movements almost with a feeling of contempt till I caught a whiff of the fumes, and then on the instant my apathy gave way beneath a sudden leap of rage and terror.

"Put out the accursed thing!" I yelled, regardless of aught save safety, and forthwith leapt up from the table.

"Grossier comme un Anglais—comme votre ancestre lui-même,"—was the retort; and never in my life have I seen so devilish a look as I encountered then.

"Put it out!" I shouted again, and, half-suffocated by the villainous odours, which seemed, strangely enough, not to affect my enemy in the least, I looked about me for some weapon of offence.

An old andiron in the chimney caught my eye, and, hastily snatching it up, I advanced upon my host.

"Ah, ha!" quoth he softly to himself, his eyes and lips one gleam of malice; and drawing in his breath with an extraordinary satisfaction, "Je suis vengé, je suis vengé," he repeated twice.

"Put out the Accursed thing"

I leapt upon him; but, with a swift turn, he had avoided me, had laid his hand upon the arras, lifted it, and disappeared.

I bounded after, seized hold of the tapestry, and, with a shout of triumph, tore it aside, poising my weapon high in the air to strike him down. He had disappeared: nothing but heavy panelling met my eye.

"Murderer!" I cried—"madman! mummer! scarlet devil! whatever you are—come forth and face me like a man!"

My weapon thudded heavily on the wood, and found no hollow, nor possibility of opening.

Suddenly bethinking me of the flagon, I seized the same, then cast the glowing bowl of pastilles on the floor, and dashed its contents with the liquor.

"Curse it!" I cried in despair, for the flames but leapt the brighter at the discharge, compelling me to fall back before the increasing smoke.

I cast an eye upon the tapestry, but 'twas too moth-eaten and infirm to serve as an extinguisher to that fiendish pyre upon the floor, and I cursed my folly in ever accepting a lunatic's hospitality. To perish without a stroke for life, choked with foul vapours, like vermin in a hole, was maddening.

I looked round in despair. How my enemy had disappeared was a mystery, and where we had both entered was imperceptible to my eye. The one small window was out of reach; the walls on either side were smooth of lock or bolt; in an agony of rage and terror, and now scarce able to draw breath, I sank upon the floor prepared to die.

Suddenly and unexpectedly I felt revived. A space clear from the fumes apparently still remained, some two feet from the ground, and, heartened slightly, I once more looked about me.

I now noticed for the first time that the spot whereon I lay seemed worm-eaten and slender, being formed of much less substantial wood than the remaining portion.

Crawling on hands and knees I reached for the andiron once more, and, lying at length upon the floor, commenced as lusty an assault as I could upon the beams about me.

Something gave way suddenly, for I felt the whole floor tremble; and, warmed by this success, I hammered rapidly all round me. I felt the place whereon I lay give a shiver beneath me. A crack sounded; then, with a crash, I fell amongst splinters of wood, headlong, it seemed, into space.

The next moment my ear caught a thud, as of some falling object suddenly brought up; and at once I awoke to the fact that I was lying, apparently safe, but bruised all over, upon a sort of couch in the room below.

I had not fallen above twelve feet or so, yet it seemed an age since I had left the room above. I lay quietly as I had fallen, thanking Heaven for my escape, gasping for fresh air meanwhile, and coughing forth the foul smoke which still clogged my lungs.

There came a quick pattering of sabots on the stair, and the next minute a frightened girl's face peeped through the doorway.

"Holy Virgin! what have we here? My faith, but it must be a robber or the devil in person!—and a great hole in the ceiling where the wall should be. What means it?" cried the owner of the face, staring at me, as she crossed herself for fear.

"No, no," coughed I with difficulty; "no devil or robber, only a poor Englishman who, venturing to inspect this ancient house, was entrapped by a rascal in the robe of a cardinal, and nearly murdered.

"The Cardinal?" queried she, with an amazed air, in apparent forgetfulness of

her fears, for she advanced a step farther into the room as she spoke. "You have seen him, then? 'Tis marvellous!"

"Indeed, yes," said I; and, sitting up, I endeavoured to relate my perilous adventure, and to demand help in obtaining justice upon my would-be destroyer.

"I too have seen him, once—twice—three times," said she, at the close of my narration; "but he is not living, he is a ghost," and she sank her voice to a whisper "But you must not tell my uncle, who will not hear of such things. He keeps the shop," she continued, in answer to my look of inquiry, "and such stories, he says, will damage his trade. Yes, I have seen him three times," she went on: "always the same, in a great red robe like a frock, with a white, white face, and sad eyes—oh, such sad eyes!—and always he disappeared quite suddenly, in the nodding of the head, as one may say. And always it was about this time of year that he appeared," she continued; then suddenly broke off, for a sound of heavy footsteps jarred upon the stairs, and I could hear breathings as of a heavy man mounting slowly.

"Ah, it is my uncle!" she murmured; and a ponderous individual, clad in a blue smock, appeared in the doorway.

Resting a hand on his niece's shoulder, he glared at me over his spectacles with suspicious mien.

"What does this rascal here?" asked he of his niece angrily.

"He is a poor Englishman, uncle," she replied nervously, "who—who—has missed his way, and has fallen through the floor, as it appears."

"A poor Englishman, truly!" snorted the man in the smock, with a most malignant air. "Ma foi, yes! and he would break through my roof and enrich himself at my expense, doubtless. I know them—these English: they are all alike—rascals, robbers, that they are!"

"I was at the stair head before he recovered himself"

With this he turned towards his niece, and whispered sharply in her ear, "Go, fetch the gendarme at once, while I watch over the rascal," pushing her out of the door as he issued his instructions.

I sat aghast as I listened to the sound of the sabots slowly descending the staircase, for I felt I had but escaped destruction to find refuge in a French prison.

Safety evidently must be sought in instant flight; so I at once rose from my seat, and, pointing to the hole, whence the smoke from above had already found an outlet, I endeavoured to distract his attention from myself.

"I fear," said I, with what show of politeness I could muster, "that your upper story is a fire. Would it not be wise to send for the fire-engine rather than the gendarmes?" I suggested blandly.

He glared first at me, then at the jagged hole above and the issuing smoke; whereupon I, with a sudden leap forward and a quick turn under his arm, had taken him by surprise, and was at the stair-head before he recovered himself

I was half way down before he had turned round, and was well into the street as his ponderous foo'steps found the stairs. Turning sharply, I gained the market-place, and immediately doubled back up a narrow alley, whence, at a little distance to the right, a second turning seemed to lead downwards to the river, which I had so recently crossed on entering the town.

I now walked along at a more leisurely pace, endeavouring to make a fair show of being at my ease, and determined not to look behind me, though I expected every moment to feel a heavy hand-clap upon my shoulder. Very soon, however, I had gained the bridge, and there, on the farther side, lay the snug orchard where alone I felt my safety was to be found.

I looked cautiously around. An old man driving goats before him passed me on the bridge, and to him I gave as cheery a "good-evening" as I could muster. Doffing his cap he courteously responded, and I hastened on quickly, for I thought

"Tobacco stayed the pangs of hunger"

I caught a sound of a hue and cry in the distance. An out-jutting angle of the wall afforded a shelter from the line of road, and here it was that I clambered up, then dropped down into a bed of soft clover below the orchard trees.

Surely here, at least, I am safe, thought I, as I lay still in the cool herbage, determined to starve rather than venture forth and run the risk of fresh surprises within this town of peril. The night sped away, and, save for a chilly moment when I heard two passers-by on the other side of the wall alluding to an English robber and incendiary for whom the gendarmes were still searching, without any great discomfort, for tobacco stayed the pangs of hunger till, stealing away at early dawn and furtively making my way to the station, I obtained some coffee before catching the first train to the north.

* * * * * * *

My first care, on my return home, was to diligently search through our family records; for what I had gleaned from the young girl's conversation had given me

an idea, which I was extremely anxious to verify, however impossible at first sight it might appear.

Certain facts I gathered, and they are as follow What their connection may be with my extraordinary adventure I leave to others

The young cavalier, the Monseigneur de Beauclerc mentioned above, had been the nephew of the famous Cardinal de R——, who, failing of election to the Pontificate, had lavished all his ambition upon his kinsman and sought to render his career phenomenally brilliant. The tourney at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, however, had been the occasion, and my ancestor the unwilling instrument, as narrated above, of the young man's untimely death; and thereon, it appears, the Cardinal had withdrawn from public life and passed the last few years of his life in the country town of his birth, brooding over his bereavement, and constantly meditating of revenge.

HOWARD PEASE.

TO MY COUNTRY LOVE.

IN the Cotswolds is a nest
With a name so dear
That there's sorrow in my breast
If I linger here:
It is Birdlip, Birdlip,
Cherry, apple, sloe!
And it's Ah to be at Birdlip
For the healing of my woe!

In the Cotswolds is a nest
Of a peace so deep,
Where it surely would be best
To be kissed by sleep
It is Birdlip, Birdlip,
Nightingales and dew!
And it's Ah to be at Birdlip,
Happy nightingales, with you!

In the Cotswolds is a nest
With a maid so sweet,
That there's sorrow in my breast
Till our bosoms meet.
She's at Birdlip, Birdlip,
Fragrance and delight!
And it's Ah to be at Birdlip
In your arms, my Love, to-night!

NORMAN GALE.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES IN MONKEY LANGUAGE.

EVER since the discovery of the gorilla by the Carthaginians, five centuries before Christ, there has remained a never-dying interest in the men who most resembled monkeys and the monkeys who most resembled men. From the capture of Carthage, 146 years B.C., when in the temple of Astarte, as stated by Pliny, the taxidermed pelts of two female gorillas were found, up to the present day, when the scientist is preparing a work on monkey etymology, syntax and prosody, we have sought in all ages to pierce the thin veil which has separated the anthropoid ape from the juror and the intelligent voter.

At the present moment so earnest is the scientist that every possible aid should be offered him in his efforts to solve this mystery. While one in the extreme and frozen north is discovering depraved humanity, so savage and so brutal as to mix up socially with those animals who are not too haughty, another is allowing himself to be put in a steel cage in the heart of the tropical forest, with a phonograph, studying the different dialects of the gorilla. This man shows more fully than any other the pure, earnest devotion which we admire so much in the true scientist and lover of progress.

Noticing that the gorilla, though quite abundant where his cage was placed, seemed to hesitate about approaching, a bright idea occurred to him—namely, that his clothing prevented that perfect resemblance which he wished should be impressed upon them, in order that they might yield him their confidence and a few weeks' pleasing conversation.

Thereupon he removed his clothes and placed them outside the cage. Smiling with that dental smile peculiar to the anthropoid ape, and romping about his cage with a ripple of gorilla laughter, he waited for the services at the gorilla Sabbath School to be over, in order to watch the congregation go by.

The superintendent, apparently, after the school was dismissed, was first to see the scientist, and deftly calling the attention of the others to a magnificent sunset on the other side of the road, he got them safely out of sight, and then returned to the cage.

Harsh words were exchanged between the two; but, as a novice always learns first the profanity of a new language, the savant met the mild remarks of the superintendent with the most blood-curdling oaths.

"Finding that a new kind of anthropoid had built himself a bamboo coop."

It is only recently, in fact, that the professor has discovered that the whole of his gorilla vocabulary had been so far acquired at the Five Points on the Bowery of the gorilla kingdom Finding that a new kind of anthropoid had built himself a bamboo coop by the roadside with the idea of hurling profanity at the Bible-class, the gorilla superintendent went through the professor's pockets, put on his clothes, then, glancing hastily at the gold watch, and noting that it was past his dinner time, he raised his hat to the surprised professor and hastened away, examining the professor's nice new revolver as he went.

I could tell much more of the heretofore unwritten history of the effort to obtain a social footing among the gorilla set, but space forbids.

In 1589 an English sailor, who was detained in Western Africa, discovered two varieties of anthropoid ape, which reminded him of the early Saxons, except that they were more temperate. These he described as resembling what we now call the chimpanzee and the gorilla. The latter was called pongo by the natives, and had a low, retreating forehead, like the codfish, or the sovereign voter of New York. By the sovereign voter, of course I mean the man who is opposed to any sovereign that is not in his inside pocket

This sailor described the pongo as rather plain in features, and, like the tailor-made girl, tallest when he sat down. "The legs of the pongo," says the report, "are very

short, and have no calves, or, if they have, they are apt to be in front of the leg, like those of the chorus in the antique ballet.

Believing, as I do, that every one who has the slightest ray of light to throw upon this great movement in science, this effort to acquire the monkey language and make it a part of the curriculum in our schools, so that the rising generation may not stand abashed in the presence of the chimpanzee, I have thought best to offer here a brief account of my own researches in that line some years ago.

In 1848, as spring approached, a warm personal friend and former schoolmate of my uncle Sidney had the misfortune to kill a man by means of an iron dray pin, which produced a stellated fracture of the frontal bone. The deceased, it is thought, would have survived if my uncle had been more prompt in securing a chirurgeon, who might have lifted the fractured bone from the brain and prevented the hæmorrhage, which proved fatal. My uncle's personal friend and former schoolmate, however, was absent so long looking for a doctor that the man died and had been buried over forty years when the former returned.

The travels of my uncle's personal friend and former schoolmate had brought him in contact with all sorts of men and climes; and on his return, three years ago, he gave me a youthful chimpanzee, named Phelim O'Mussle.

Phelim was quiet for a week or so, and at night seemed cursed with insomnia. The chimpanzee at home runs about a good deal of nights, and it is hard for him to adjust himself to other hours. Phelim found it especially dull, as my library did not seem to afford him the kind of reading matter he craved.

Just between the gloaming and the shank of the evening Phelim would stroll forth under the persimmon trees that cast their quivering shadows over the fragrant blue grass turf. Phelim wore a heavy head of bright red throat whiskers, which looked like a torchlight procession down his chest, and were parted in the middle as far as the pit of his stomach.

With his hands behind him and his head bowed forward, he would walk sometimes till midnight, thinking, as I afterwards learned, of the future of his people and reciprocity between them and other nations.

I finally got so that I could not bear to see Phelim suffer so, and began to study his language, at first only hoping to acquire some of his proper names and a little profanity, so that we could be on easier terms; but after awhile I got to adding prepositions and conjunctions.

Soon I became an enthusiast, and learned even to note the inflections of his voice. Long before that he had learned to know when I was sad, or even thoughtful. He could tell when I was bored, and could make a bore so unhappy that he would go away rather than feel Phelim's cold nose up his cuff or down his collar.

Soon I began to learn Phelim's language, so that I could parse whole sentences or decline some of his verbs with thanks. I am a good imitator, and soon got to using figures of speech, and could tell dialect stories to him in his own tongue, and I can truly say that he was equal to the occasion, for he told me many amusing anecdotes, especially of explorers who had been in Africa and who had killed so many niggers that they began to look upon themselves as great sportsmen, shooting the Africans who could only fight at spear's length, while the explorer had elephant guns, express rifles, and explosive bullets that would strike the unprotected mother, and not only tear her into shreds, but at the same time obliterate the babe in her arms.

Phelim was on the ground when one of the foreign slave traders and tusk hunters was trying to escape from a party who wanted to rescue him and write it up for their paper. Phelim said that the horrible look of apprehension on the face of the man,

"My library did not seem to afford him the kind of reading matter he craved"

who sought by travel day and night to avoid being rescued and Kodakkered and interviewed, tickled him so, that often he had to get down and wallow in the tall grass and squeal with glee.

Phrenologically Phelim was lacking in spirituality, reverence, and ideality; but he was large in alimentiveness, amativeness, love of home, self-esteem and constructiveness.

We were good companions, however, and I only feared that in learning his language I was dealing with one who was self-made, perhaps, and who, figuratively speaking, would use such expressions, for instance, at table as, "Please to pass those molasses," or "I seen my duty and I done it." I was anxious to know sometimes whether I had been learning the language and its idioms from an academician or a Congo chump.

But I must hurry on. We got so at last that we could trust each other, and I told Phelim many things that I have never told to any one else. Phelim and the recording angels and I alone knew these things. Phelim also told me his whole past life, but he was such a self-acting liar that it would be idle to repeat here what he said, and difficult to even freely translate it from the clicks and squeals of which his language was made up. He once recited a poem to me regarding his far-away home, and it sounded more like the song of a lawn-mower than anything else I can think of.

But Phelim was not perfect. He was given on Christmas, a year ago, a fragment of pudding with brandy sauce. The brandy sauce seemed to remind him of something: perhaps it was a club dinner on the Congo years ago; I saw him put his hand to his brow as if in deep thought.

We had just been discussing the question of the tariff as a tax and tariff for revenue only. Phelim had held to the last that it was not tariff or no tariff that agitated the businesses and worried the industries of the States, but continued agitation, and consequent anxiety, apprehension and alarm which hurt the universal interests of mankind—a theory which we agreed upon most heartily.

Soon, however, he excused himself and left the room, running his fingers through his red throat whiskers thoughtfully. I did not know then that he had a slumbering demon in his breast, or that he had been sent away from Africa by his friends to cure him of this terrible thirst; but it was true.

I heard him pacing his room combating the evil spirit in his breast and brain; but when the house was still it seems that he stole to the cook's window and entered it by removing a pane of glass which he had cut out by means of a diamond ring belonging to my wife and handed down to us through the Smiths, who belonged to the Crusaders, and who also offered a large reward for the Holy Grail.

Phelim looked through the cook's dress for the pocket containing the key of the store-room, but finding each time that his hand came out at the same place where it had entered, he became so maddened that he picked up an alarm-clock which the cook had in her side pocket for the purpose of wakening her in the morning, and had there not all at once stolen over the sleeping face an expression which reminded him of his sister, Phelim would have brained her.

At last, however, he secured the key, and in the morning Phelim was gone. The store-room door was open and everything wet was gone. People began to miss their chickens and water melons, the police were informed, but their own pockets were picked while they were hunting for the mysterious thief.

This thing went on for three weeks, till one day I looked out at my window and saw in one of the persimmon trees a hand beckoning me. I went out, and found that

—The horrible look of apprehension on the face of the man"

it belonged to Phelim. He was penitent and out of rum. A little to brace him up, and once more he would lead a respectable and respected life.

We went out to the barn. I gave Phelim a tall glass of brandy and soda, and he said now he felt he could squeeze his head through the barn door without injury to the barn.

Suddenly, however, he made a grab for the decanter, but I held on fiercely till he took a fillet out of the calf of my leg. This surprised me, and embittered me towards Phelim, so that I strolled up the stairs in an aimless way, hoping to conceal myself in the hay mow. What happened in the hay mow I never knew. Loving friends came and pulled Phelim off and brought me back to consciousness with what he had left in the bottle.

Some of my clothes had been torn off in the frolic, but the adhesive plaster on my

He made a grab for the decanter

chest, which had been prescribed for my cough, was still there. Nobody can pull off an adhesive plaster.

I caught up a pitchfork as I became more lucid, and Freedom shrieked when Phelim fell. I took him to a Drunkards' Retreat, but the way he made the other drunkards retreat when he got there had a good deal to do with his unpopularity. He also drank up the Eau de Cologne and cod-liver oil that belonged to other patients, and finally, discovering where the superintendent kept his private tank, Phelim entered the laboratory one night, embezzled the whole stock and fled to a deserted lime kiln, where he drank himself to death after professing religion at a camp-meeting while in a beastly state of intoxication.

I found after his death that my knowledge of his language was useless, for three reasons: First, he had a cleft palate and had taught me incorrectly; second, it was

proved that before he came to me he had lost his mind, and third, he was the last chimpanzee of the family using that language, all the others having died of an epidemic from which he escaped by being at the time in a Congo's Drunkards' Home.

His grave is beneath the persimmon trees, whose freckled shade he loved so well in summer time, and where yet the song-bird wakes the valley in the morning, and through the fragrant dusk of evening we hear the soft voice of the tree-toad calling for rain

Over the little tomb loving friends have erected a white head-board taken from the top of a soap box, and on it is printed by trembling hands:—

BILL NYE.

ONE of the cheeriest Christmas-days was that spent on the pleasant banks of the Limpopo river, not many years since. Two hunting friends were trekking through Bechuanaland towards the Zambesi, and it happened by great good fortune that, just at the junction of the Notwani and Limpopo rivers, they found outspanned the waggons of two hunters and traders southward bound from the far interior. These men were travelling down country with heavy loads of ivory, ostrich feathers, skins and other produce, and they had with them a big troop of cattle obtained in barter. In these fitful encounters in the African wilderness men are always well met, and it needed no pressing from the new found acquaintances to induce them to outspan together, and combine forces for Christmas cheer and Christmas chatter. A brief council of war soon settled the all-important question of commissariat. Smallfield, the younger of the traders, had shot a good rooibok the evening before, which furnished venison for all, and they had already baked a store of bread from fresh Boer meal. The new comers, on their side, freshly equipped from Kimberley, could provide tinned plum-puddings, tinned tomatoes, peas, jams and other luxuries, including dried onions, most precious of vegetables in the veldt; and they had further some excellent Scotch whiskey. They had, besides, half a dozen brace of guinea-fowl and pheasants, shot during the day in the jungles bordering the river, so that all the concomitants of a capital African banquet were ready to hand.

Just at sundown the preparations were complete, and no merrier party, you may swear, ever sat down to their Christmas meal. They supped by the light of a roaring camp fire, eked out by a lantern or two placed on the cases that served for tables. The servants were enjoying themselves at another fire at a little distance; the oxen lay peacefully at their yokes, the waggons loomed large alongside, their white tents reflecting cheerfully the ruddy blaze of the fire, the night was perfect, still and warm, and the stars, like a million diamond sparks, scintillated in the intense indigo of the dome above. What wonder, then, that all felt happy and contented?

"No merrier party ever sat down to their Christmas meal"

Supper at length over, the coffee kettle was banished to obscurity and the whiskey produced. The travellers lit their pipes and toasted their absent friends and each other, and then ensued a long and delightful evening.

The traders were two capital, manly fellows, well versed in the sports and toils and pleasures of the far interior; the new-comers themselves had been in the hunting veldt before, and they had all, therefore, many things in common. Many and many a yarn of the chase and adventure they exchanged; many a head of gallant game they slew again by the cheerful blaze. The up-country trekkers mentioned that they thought of trying a new bit of veldt, rather away from the beaten track, if but they could find water in the desert, and good guides and spoorers—they were bent on entering the wild and little known tract of country north of the road to the Mababé veldt.

"Well," said the elder of the traders—Kenstone was his name—"you'll find game there after the rains—giraffe, gemsbok, hartebeest, eland, koodoo, roan antelope, and perhaps a few elephant, or a rhinoceros or two. But it's a wild, barren veldt: the country as you go north is a good deal broken, and, unless the rains have been good, water is terribly scarce there. As for myself" (gazing rather moodily at the camp fire, and stroking his thick brown beard), "I once went into that veldt, and never wish to see it again. I had a most uncanny adventure there—an experience I never again wish to repeat if I live to a hundred. In all the years (and they are close on five-and-twenty now) I have been in the hunting veldt, I never spent so incomprehensible and horrible a time as the few days I am thinking of. Ugh!" and the big man shivered as he spoke.

Naturally the curiosity of his audience was at once excited. The younger trader, Smallfield, spoke first.

"Why, George," he said, "I never heard you speak of that country. I never even knew you had been in it. What's the yarn? It must be something out of the common if it gives *you* the blues. You're not sentimental, as far as I remember."

"No, Jim," returned Kenstone, "I never mentioned the thing to you or to any one else, bar, perhaps, two or three folks. It's eleven years gone since it all happened. My old partner, Angus (he's down in the Colony now), who was with me at the time, knows all about it, and I reported some of the circumstances to a Transvaal Landdrost when we got back. Otherwise I have never talked about the matter—I should only be chaffed, and it's not a pleasant topic at the best of times. It gave me a very nasty *schrijk** at the time, I remember. However, it's all far enough away now, if you and these gentlemen would like to hear the yarn, as it's Christmas-time, and we're so well met, why, I'll break my rule and tell you all about it. And mind, what I tell you are solid facts. You know I don't 'blow,' Jim, or spout tall yarns for the benefit of down-country folks or bar-loafers at Kimberley. What I saw I saw, and, please God, hope never to see again."

All were as keen as mustard for the story, and Kenstone went on.

"Well, let me fill my pipe, and give me another *soupje* of whiskey, and" (nodding a health to his hearers over his glass) "here goes:—

"It was in '74 that Angus and I were making our third trip to the Lake N'gami country. This time we had got leave from Khama to trade and hunt in Mababé and the Chobé River country; and we meant to push even beyond, to the region between the Sunta and the Okavango, if the fever would let us. We made a good trek of it across the 'thirst'—there had been very late rains that year—and even after crossing the Lake river we made good travelling well on towards the Mababé flat. We heard from the Makobas and Masarwas along the river that there was still some water standing in the bush on our right hand, that there were elephant in there, and that other game was abundant. It is not often that this veldt is accessible—from scarcity of water—and it seemed good enough to quit the waggon road for a time, and try the bush for ivory. Before reaching Scio Pans, therefore, we turned right-handed, and struck into the bush with one waggon—the other, in charge of our head driver, being sent on to the water, there to await our coming.

"We had some Masarwa bushmen with us, and they were as keen as hawks at the prospect of showing us heavy game, and getting a liberal supply of flesh. Northward we trekked steadily through wild desolate country for the best part of one day, and outspanned by a desert pool for the night. Here we were greatly disappointed to find no spoor of elephant, although giraffe, ostrich, gemsbok and hartebeest were fairly plentiful. Next day at dawn we again pushed doggedly on, Angus and I taking different directions, and riding some miles ahead of the waggon on the look out for elephant spoor. I rode behind a Masarwa at a steady pace all morning without finding the least sign of the game we wanted, and, after an off saddle at midday, once more pushed on in a north-westerly direction.

"Rather suddenly we came upon a *klompje* of giraffe, and as the elephants seemed very much in the air and we wanted meat, I rammed the spurs in and galloped headlong for the *kameels*† It was desperately hot, and we were shut up in thick thorny bush in which not a breath of wind stirred, and I consequently had not got my coat on. The beast I rode for, a fat, fresh young cow, led me a pretty dance of two miles, hell for leather, at a terrific pace through the very thickest jungle she could pick

* Fright. † Camels. The Boer term for giraffe.

"We set to work to skin the cow"

and although I presently ranged close up to her rump, and with my third bullet (firing from my horse) brought her down with a crash, she had taken pretty heavy toll of me. My flannel shirt was torn to ribbons, and my chest and shoulders were rarely gashed about. Never hunt 'camel,' gentlemen, in thick bush without a stout coat on; that's the advice of an old veldt man, and it's worth remembering. I ought to have known better that day, but I was not prepared for game at that particular moment.

"Well, I stuck my knife into the cow's back and found her well covered with fat, and the Masarwa coming up soon after, we set to work to skin and cut her up. Presently, having fastened about twenty pounds of meat to my saddle, and carrying the long, prehensile tongue dangling far below my belt, I saddled up, leaving the Masarwa, who had a calabash of water, to finish the job and wait for the waggon to pick him up next morning.

"I myself took a sweep north north-east, with the intention of working round to the waggon before sundown.

"I had not left the Masarwa half an hour, when I suddenly, to my intense surprise, cut the spoor of a waggon running pretty well east and west, and going westward. It was not fresh, but at the same time not very old either. It might have been a month or two old at most. 'Now,' thought I, 'what in the mischief does this mean?' Very few hunters use this veldt. I knew Khama had sent no waggons that way this season, and the only white man in front of us this year was Dirk Starreberg, one of the few Dutch hunters to whom Khama gave permission to hunt in his veldt. Starreberg's waggon it could only be. And yet it struck me as strange that Dirk, whom I knew well—for he was a noted interior hunter—should be trekking in this veldt. He was, I knew, bound for the Victoria Falls. Probably, like ourselves, enticed by the

unwonted water supply and the possibility of a slap at the elephants, he had turned off somewhere between Nata river and Daka, and pushed across for the Chobé. Thus reasoning, I turned my horse's head, and, with the westering sun now on my right flank, struck homeward for the waggon. I rode on for half a mile, and then came another strange thing. As I crossed an open glade I saw coming towards me the figure of a man. I knew in a moment who it was. The slouching walk, the big, burly form, the vast red beard, the rifle carried—as Dirk always carried his—by the muzzle end, with the stock poised behind his shoulder—it was none but Dirk Starreberg himself. But there was something amiss with him. He looked worn and troubled, almost distraught, it seemed to me, at that distance; and he gazed neither to right nor left of him, but passed hurriedly and very swiftly in front of me at a distance of about eighty paces.

"'Hallo! Dirk!' I shouted. 'Allemagtig! war loup jij? Wacht een bitje, Dirk!' (Almighty! where are you off to? Wait a little, Dirk!) To my utter astonishment, the man took not the slightest notice, but passed on. I became indignant, and yelled, 'Dirk, Dirk, have you no manners? It's me, George Kenstone. I want you. Stop!' Still the man passed on. In another moment he had reached the bush again. He turned now, beckoned to me with his right hand, and, in another instant, had disappeared into the low forest.

"I was extremely annoyed, and after staring like a fool for a second or two, struck in spurs rather sharply and galloped after him. I was not three seconds in reaching the bush where he had entered, but, to my surprise, Dirk had vanished. I searched hither and thither, shouted—aye, swore—but still no Dirk. I came back, at length, to the point where I had last seen the Boer. Surprise No. 3. There was my own spoor as plain as a pikestaff in the red sand, but of Dirk Starreberg *not one trace of spoor was to be seen!*

"Now, spoor, as you all know, is a thing that never lies. I had seen Dirk cross the clearing and enter the bush at this point. Where were his tracks? I got off my horse and hunted carefully every bit of the way across the glade where I had seen Dirk pass. I am a reasonable good veldt-man, but—so help me God!—I never could find one trace of the man's spoor, this way or that. I rubbed my eyes. It was incomprehensible. I searched again and again, carefully and methodically, with the same result. There was always my own and my horse's spoor, but no one else's.

"By this time I was not a little bothered. There must be some infernal mystery which I could not fathom. My eyesight had never yet failed me. It was broad daylight, and I was neither asleep, nor dreaming, nor drunk. An old childish superstition crept for an instant upon my mind, to be instantly cast aside. And yet the flesh, even of grown manhood, is weak. I remember distinctly that I shivered, blazing hot as was the afternoon. The bush seemed very still and lonely, and I am bound to say it suddenly struck me it was time to move for the waggon. I got on to my good nag, walked him away, and presently set him into a brisk canter, which I only once slackened till I made the camp, just at sundown, a couple of hours later.

"I told Angus what I had seen. He laughed, and told me I had evidently missed the spoor, although he admitted that it was strange that Dirk had made no sign when I hailed him; and next morning we moved on rapidly, picked up the meat of the dead giraffe, and then a little later struck the waggon-spoor I had found yesterday. This we followed briskly until four o'clock p.m., when we came upon an old outspan, and discovery No. 4.

"Here was a good-sized water-pit in limestone formation. There were the remains of the camp-fire; and it was evident, from several indications, that the waggon,

"'Hallo! Dirk! Allemagtig! wat loup jij?'

whosever it was, had stood at least two days at this spot. The kameel-doorn trees* grew pretty thickly all around, and there was a good deal of bush, and altogether it was a sequestered, silent spot. Lying by the largest of the dead fires was an object that instantly quickened our interest in the mystery we were unravelling—the skeleton of a man, clean picked by the foul vultures, but apparently untouched by hyænas or jackals. There were still the tattered remains of clothing upon it, and one veldt-schoen—a Boer veldtschoen—upon the right foot. I turned over the poor bleached framework to try and discover some inkling of its end. As I did so, out pattered from the skull on to the sand a solid Martini-Henry bullet, slightly flattened on one side of its apex, manifestly from impact with some bone it had encountered—

* Giraffe acacias

probably a cheek-bone. A closer scrutiny revealed a big hole in rear of the skull, just behind the right ear.

"'By George!' exclaimed Angus, who was bending over me, 'there's been foul play here. That shot was fired at pretty close quarters.'

"I nodded, and at that instant my Masarwa, who had been searching about near us, picked up and brought me a bunch of long red hair.

"'So help me God!' I could not help exclaiming, 'that's from Dirk Starreberg's beard, for any money. He has been murdered here—that's certain. If it was an accident, they would have buried him. The question is, who is the murderer?'

"We hunted about, but found no more traces, except the other veldtschoen and the remains of a Dutchman's broad brimmed hat We outspanned for the night, and sat down to think it over and have a pipe while supper was being got ready.

"'Angus,' I said, 'I don't half like things. There's some dark riddle here The figure I saw yesterday afternoon was Dirk Starreberg's. I knew him well and never could mistake him. And, strangely enough, he was heading, when I last saw him, for this very spot. If I believed in ghosts, which I don't, I should say I had seen Dirk's spook What do you make of it all? I'm beginning to think I'm dreaming, or going dotty. It beats me altogether.'

"'Well,' returned Angus, in his quaint way, 'it's the most extraordinary rum go I ever heard of. We'd better trek on in the morning, first thing, and see what else we can discover. Those are Dirk's bones undoubtedly, we must try and do something for the poor chap, though he is dead'

"I don't know what was wrong that night, but several times the oxen were startled, and sprang to their feet; and the nags—fastened up to the waggon wheels—were desperately scared once or twice, and pulled at their *riems* as though they must break them, the dogs, too, barked, and howled, and behaved very strangely And yet no lions were near us. Once or twice we looked out, but saw nothing All of us, masters and boys, were uncomfortable, we could hardly explain why; and the men undoubtedly knew nothing of what I had seen the day before.

"At dawn, next morning, we were not sorry to inspan and trek, and, following the old waggon-spoor, we pushed on, determined, if possible, to get to the bottom of the affair. All that day and all the next we toiled on, only outspanning once or twice during the daytime—and, at night, by water, to rest and refresh the oxen for a few hours. At last, an hour before sunset of the second day, Angus and I, who were riding ahead of the waggon, spied suddenly among some kameel-doorn trees the tent of a waggon, to which we cantered. Suddenly, as we reined up, the fore-clap was cast aside, and a wild figure of a woman appeared and scrambled down from the waggon-box. It was Vrouw Starreberg, but terribly, sadly altered from the stout, if somewhat grim, goodwife I had last seen a couple of years before. Her dark stuff dress was torn and cut about by the thorn-bushes; her erst fat, smooth face--broad though it still was—was lined and haggard, and terribly fallen away; but, above all, there was a rolling vacancy, a wildness, in her eye, that made me fear at once for her reason. Under one arm she clasped tightly a big Bible, and never, in the subsequent days that we were together, did she once relinquish it. It seemed that some terrible calamity had overturned her reason

"'Whence come ye, George Kenstone?' (she had known me well for years), she cried, in a harsh, high pitched scream, very painful to listen to 'Take me out of this desert and back to my home. I have been cast away these six weeks, able to move neither hand nor foot for freedom The man I called husband is dead, and my servants have fled, and the oxen are gone the Lord knows where.'

"A wild figure of a woman appeared."

"I scarce knew how to begin with her.

"'I'm sorry, Tant' Starreberg,' I said, 'to find you in this plight. I'm afraid there has been sad mischief, and your husband has been shot. Is it not so? We will help you gladly, of course, and early in the morning, when the oxen will be rested, we will take you out of this place. I fear you have suffered much. But how came poor Dirk by his end? Was it the boys?'

"At the mention of Dirk her whole expression changed; her eyes filled with a terrible light. In her best days Vrouw Starreberg was a hard-featured, ugly woman. Now she looked almost fiendish.

"*Poor* Dirk?' she shrieked, with a horrible scorn. '*Poor* Dirk? No, I am not afraid to own it! The man you call Dirk Starreberg—he was no more husband of mine—died by my hand. I shot him; yes, dead I shot him, as he sat by his fire. And why? Because he lied and was unfaithful. Because he forsook me for that mop-headed, blue-eyed, pink-faced doll—Jacoba Veeland. And when at last I had discovered all—he talked overmuch in his sleep, the traitor!—and taxed him with it, here in this very veldt, he laughed me to scorn, and told me he was tired of my black face and my sour ways, and gloried in his evil love. Ja! he taunted me that I was old and barren—I that had made a man of him, and brought him gold, and flocks, and herds, and set him up. And so I shot him—as I say. I could endure it no longer; and the servants, having trekked to this place with me, fled, and the oxen wandered, and I am alone, the Lord help me!" At the next instant the poor, overwrought creature fell in a swoon upon the sand.

"Well, it was all very horrible; although even now we hardly knew what to believe. But we brought her to, gave her some brandy, and put her into her waggon to rest. And later on I took her some soup and bread, and made her eat it. She was exhausted now, and told me in a low voice that she had lived on meal and water for weeks past. Presently we turned in, and all was quiet.

"It was, I suppose, some little time after midnight that Angus and I were roused by a loud voice beyond the camp-fire, which lay between the other waggon and our own. We listened; it was the Vrouw herself. Hastily we got down from the kartel and went towards her. She was beyond the fire, and her figure was well-nigh lost in the gloom of night. We could just see her white *kappje*, and an arm waving frantically. It was a terrible and uncanny scene. There stood the woman, screaming in wild and excited tones at something beyond—what we could not see, and shivered even to imagine. 'Yes,' she cried, 'you come here to frighten me, Dirk Starreberg. I feared you not in life; I fear you not in death. I slew you, and I would slay you again. But I know why you walk thus through the veldt, and come seeking to drive me mad, night after night. To-morrow—now that I can trek—I will come and bury your bones, and you may rest quiet if you can. Trouble me no more, I say—begone!'

"Angus and I could stand it no longer, sick with horror though we were.

"'Come back to your waggon, Vrouw Starreberg,' I called out. 'You are dreaming. Go to rest again.'

"Still glaring in front of her, the woman stepped back till she had met our advance. I am bound to say that I looked, and Angus looked, with terrified eyes, but saw nothing of what she saw or thought she saw. We took the poor mad creature's arms. She was trembling and wet—literally bathed in perspiration. What the tension must have been if this sort of thing had been going on night after night I shuddered even to think of. We took her to her waggon and gave her a strong dose of brandy-and-water, and presently she fell into heavy sleep. Then Angus and I got down our karosses, rekindled a roaring fire, and sat smoking by the blaze for the rest

"There stood the woman, screaming in wild and excited tones."

"We buried the body and skeleton together"

of that night. Scared as I was, I believe I dozed once or twice, and Angus always swears, to this day, that he once saw the figure of Dirk Starreberg pass within the firelight fifty yards away. He woke me, but it had gone. The cattle were uneasy and disturbed again, and our Kaffirs, who had heard the Vrouw talking, as they said, at a spook, lay huddled together under our waggon. It was uncanny, devilish uncanny, I can tell you, that intangible horror about the camp.

"Well, the rest of my story is short. Vrouw Starreberg was moving before dawn,

and insisted that we must trek back to the old camp and bury the skeleton. We—fearing more horrors—said it could not be done, and that we should at once quit the bush and strike directly for the road. She then utterly refused to leave her waggon unless we did as she asked. We seriously thought of taking her by force, but she was a strong, powerful woman, her mind was already unhinged, and we feared the consequences of a struggle. And so, very reluctantly, we agreed to humour her and give her her wish. It was a ghastly business; we only prayed to get it quickly over.

"At earliest streak of daylight we were inspanned, and all day travelled steadily back towards the scene of Dirk's tragical ending. That night, strange to say, nothing happened to disturb us; everything passed quietly. We trekked again all next day, and halted for the night some three miles short of 'the skeleton outspan,' as we called it. Our reason for this was that we hoped the burial might be quietly accomplished in the bright sunshine of next morning, and the woman got well away, before nightfall, on the homeward journey. Vrouw Starreberg, I noticed, was restless and excited, but she made no objection. Again, I noticed that she still carried her Bible tightly clasped under the left arm. The Vrouw lay in our waggon; Angus and I sleeping by the fire again. We were dog-tired, and slept soundly until roused, just as daylight broke, by our waggon-driver, a Griqua named Albrecht. The man was looking very strangely. 'Baas,' he said, 'the Vrouw is not there' (pointing to the waggon); 'she went in the night. I heard her whispering, and I looked from where I was lying, and there she was, beyond the firelight, following a man—a Dutchman I think—or a spook, I don't know which, towards the murderer's outspan (*de mordenaar's outspan to*). I was frightened, Baas, and I dared not move. There is her spoor; but the man's spoor I cannot see.'

"We sprang to our feet and went straight to the waggon; the fore-clap was pulled aside; the kartel was empty. Yes, she had gone; and our hearts were sick with a nameless fear. Taking Albrecht with us, we saddled up at once, and spoored the Vrouw along the track towards the old outspan. And there, surely enough, we found her, stone dead by the side of the skeleton.

"There was no mark upon her, but in her face was the most awful look of horror and of fright that I ever saw upon the countenance of the dead. I believe she had died of sheer terror, and of nothing else. What had happened in those silent, terrible night hours—by what ghastly agency she had been dragged to the scene of the tragedy—how the end had actually come, God only knows.

"We were but too anxious to get away from this dreadful place after such events. We buried the body and skeleton together, and trekked out as fast as the oxen could travel, never stopping till we had struck the road and reached Scio Pans.

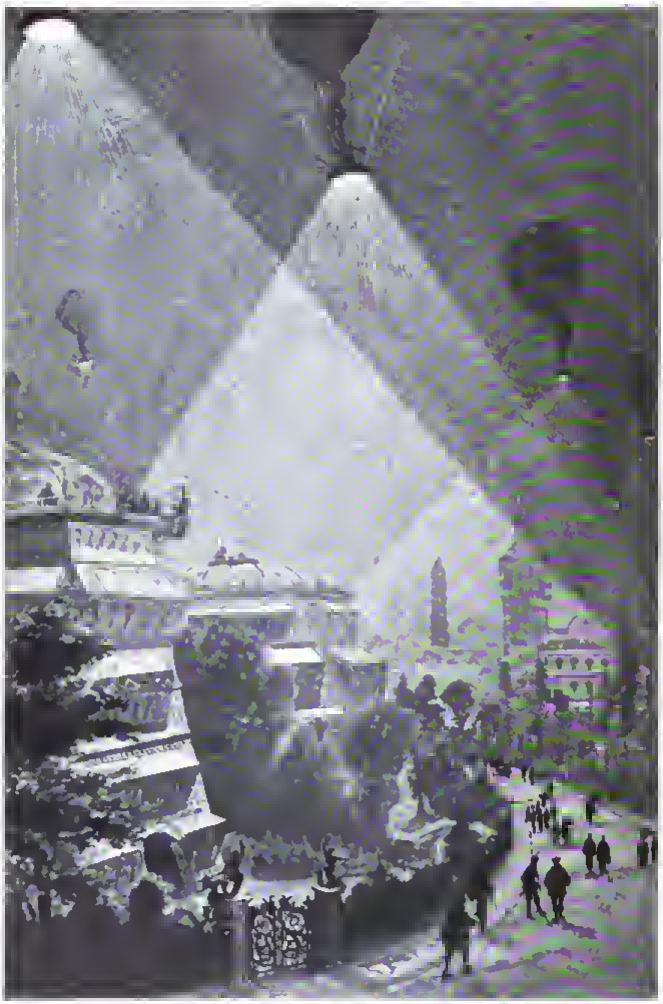
"That, gentlemen, is my solitary experience of spooks. I never want to have another. I was a scoffer before, I am a believer now. And if you told me that in the bush I speak of there were now standing ready for me, as a free gift, two buck-waggons loaded up with ivory—why, I should decline the offer.

"Never would I be induced to enter that veldt again!"

H. A. Bryden.

GUESSES AT FUTURITY.—NO. 1.
HOME LIFE IN ANNO DOMINI 2000

GUESSES AT FUTURITY.—NO. 2.
THE HOUSETOP GARDEN



GUESSES AT FUTURITY.—NO. 3.
STREET LIGHTING. ANNO DOMINI 2000.

GUESSES AT FUTURITY.—NO. 4

COURTYARD TO MANSIONS. ANNO DOMINI 2000.

GUESSES AT FUTURITY. NO. 5.—SUN RADIATORS.

GUESSES AT FUTURITY. NO. 6.
INTERPLANETARY COMMUNICATION—THE FIRST MAGNETISCOPE

GUESSES AT FUTURITY. NO. 7.
INTERPLANETARY COMMUNICATION.
GOLD MINING IN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON.

The birth of a Year

from the Drawing by Percy Moore Turner

THE Princess Crystal was lying on her couch beside the open window of her morning room. She lay quite silent and motionless, her little white hands folded on her breast, and a far away look in her blue eyes. Outside, the yellow roses which climbed up the Palace wall put their heavy, scented heads in at the window, and nodded graciously at her. The soft summer breeze gently lifted and stirred the curls of her long hair, and the bright little sunbeams played hide-and-seek in their golden tangles. A bird flew up from the garden below, and, perching on the window-sill, burst into a triumphant trill of music. He put his head on one side, and glanced at the Princess with his bright little beady eyes, but she never moved or spoke.

Poor little Princess Crystal! No one, looking at her, would have thought that she could not see; and yet it was a sad, sad truth, that she had been blind since the day she was born! Her eyes were blue,—blue as the skies, and shaded by long black lashes that prevented one from seeing that they did not change their expression and sparkle like other children's do.

There was nothing in her sweet, merry laugh and her bright little face, either, to reveal her other great misfortune: Princess Crystal was not only blind, but a cripple, and all the short life that she could remember had been passed chained to that couch beside the window.

She always tried to be patient and happy before other people, for she knew how her suffering grieved those around her, and so it was only when she was quite alone that the corners of the little mouth would droop so sadly, and big tears would force their way out and tremble on her long eyelashes.

She was terribly unhappy to-day—more unhappy than she had ever been before. There had been a great fête in the Palace gardens, and she had heard the gay voices and laughter in the distance from her open window. Two people had stopped and talked just below her. They had not stayed long, but they had said enough to wake in Princess Crystal's heart a bitter pain, such as she had never known till now.

"Yes," one of them had said, "she would make a very good bride for the Emperor as far as rank and riches go, but then she is blind and lame too. What good would that sort of wife be to a great prince like the Emperor? what help could she give him in the management of his country, or even his court?"

"Princess Crystal was lying on her couch beside the open window"

"That is true," said the other: "if he chooses a bride from our people, it will no doubt be one of the Princess Crystal's cousins. They are not so rich or so great, but then even a beggar maid would be better than a little blind cripple!"

A little blind cripple! How the words kept coming back, again and again, beating clear and terribly distinct on the poor little Princess's brain! Oh, it was hard! very, very hard! What good were her riches to her? What pleasure was there to her in being the daughter of a powerful king and queen, when she was only a little blind cripple? Oh, why was she not born a beggar maid, with strong, graceful limbs, and eyes to see the beautiful things around her?

She had heard of this Emperor before,—he was coming on a visit to her royal father, she knew. Every one was speaking of him. He was young and handsome and good, and his people worshipped him. Whoever he chose for his bride would be loved and honoured, and have everything in the world to make her happy. Oh, *why* did some people get all the happiness, while others seemed to have just been born outside the line of it, where they could see what other people felt and never know what it was to feel it for themselves?

But then softer thoughts came into the Princess Crystal's mind. After all, there were others like her in the world who had no cheery, loving father to make things look brighter, no beautiful, tender mother to love and comfort them. And, thinking on that mother's soft caressing hand and low sweet voice, the hard lines round the Princess's mouth grew softer, the great blue eyes closed, and soon she was sleeping quietly, forgetting all her troubles in the mistiness of dreamland.

A sunbeam, bolder than the rest, stole in and lit up the face of the little royal sleeper. Perhaps it was touched by the tears that still glistened there, perhaps it was lost in admiration—anyhow, there it stayed, lighting up the golden hair and rose flushed cheeks, while all the rest of the room was almost in shadow.

Princess Crystal moved uneasily; even in her dreams she felt the warmth of the intruding sunbeam, and slowly she began to awake.

What was that strange light? she wondered drowsily. It was glowing on her eyelids with a warm, red kind of glow, and presently, still half asleep, she opened her eyes. It was just instinct that made her open them, but once open, she gave a little quick gasp, and lay with her blue eyes gazing steadily towards the middle of the room. The thick blackness that had filled her sight was gone! In its place there was a cloud of strange, soft, silvery light, that shone ever brighter and yet more bright.

She could see—yes, oh yes!—she could see clearly! The pictures on the wall, the mirrors, the great hanging curtains, and the chair her mother used when she sat by her couch and told her long stories of the world she had never seen—the world that was clear to her now, by the light of that shining cloud in the middle of the room! And,—why, surely there was something in the cloud!—the faint outline of a form that grew more and more distinct every moment, till before her dazzled eyes there stood a tall, graceful figure, dressed in flowing silver draperies,—a figure from which seemed to stream out the light that flooded the room.

And then a voice, silver and clear as rippling water, fell upon the ear of the Princess.

"Princess Crystal," it said, "behold in me one of the Sunbeam Sisters. I am here to take you with me to our kingdom. Say, little one, will you come?" And the lovely being stretched out her arms towards the couch, and the silver light shone from the tips of her fingers in a long, dazzling ray that seemed to set every nerve in Princess Crystal's body quivering. It seemed to be drawing her towards her strange visitor in some unaccountable way that she could not resist.

"Come!" spoke the sweet voice again.

And—can you believe it?—the Princess rose from the couch where she had lain all her life, stood for one instant erect and strong upon her slender feet, and then went swiftly across the room towards the outstretched arms.

She felt herself encircled gently by them and lifted from the ground.

The next moment she had passed through the open window, and was floating upwards and away through the beautiful clear air and the bright summer sunshine.

Upwards, ever upwards, as if in a dream, the Palace, with its gardens and forests, the royal city and the great river, becoming smaller and smaller till they faded away in the distance. Upwards, ever upwards, until suddenly the flying motion ceased, and the Princess and her guide stood in the beautiful Kingdom of the Sunbeams.

"Welcome, my child!" said the Sunbeam, and she stooped to kiss the little radiant face.

Oh, how beautiful it was! Down on the earth there were beautiful gardens, though Princess Crystal had never seen them; but these were ten times more lovely!

And the children, too! Were ever such a quantity of happy children seen before, all at one time? How they played and danced and sang!—while in and out among them glided the beautiful sister spirits, the Sunbeams who governed this happy kingdom.

One little girl the Princess noticed particularly. She was singing,—singing as though her heart were bursting with joy,—a wild, melodious peal of happiness that went ringing up through the air.

"She is dumb down on your earth below," said the Sunbeam softly, as if she had guessed Princess Crystal's thoughts. "All the little ones you see here so joyous are afflicted in some way down there. And we find them, and bring them up to enjoy a short time of happiness here with us."

"They cannot stay long here," added another voice, and the Princess, turning,

"A tall, graceful figure, dressed in flowing silver draperies"

saw that one of the other Sunbeams had come up beside them unnoticed "Our kingdom," she went on, smiling kindly at the little stranger, "though it is so far away that you cannot see it from below, is half-way between your earth and our native land, the Sun. The air is too thin for you mortals. You would die if you remained here long Run away and play, little one, and make the most of your time here."

Princess Crystal did as she bade, and went to join the other children. Oh, how amusing it was! How delicious to hide among the shrubs, and then to pounce out with a merry shout on those who came to seek her!—to chase them right along the winding paths and over the grass, running as fast as the fastest amongst them, till, tired out, she would throw herself down under the trees and find a new pleasure simply in looking around her watching the butterflies fluttering in the sunshine, and studying the beautiful flowers that she had never done anything but smell before! When she went back to earth she would enjoy them much more, she thought, now that she knew what they really looked like.

But time was speeding on, and one by one the radiant Sisters led her little playmates away. Her own turn came at last, and she gave one last, lingering look at the beautiful gardens.

"I will come back again, lovely flowers," she said, as she kissed the crimson roses,—the first flowers her blue eyes had ever rested on. "I shall come back some day, shall I not?" she added wistfully to the Sunbeam.

"Yes, you shall come back again," answered the Sunbeam gently, but her beautiful face grew suddenly grave, and her shining eyes looked sad and troubled; and the Princess wondered, though she asked no questions.

Down, down, down! From the Land of Sunbeams, to the earth below; from the bright world above, to the gloom of blindness beneath; from freedom and activity, to the little couch by the Palace window.

"You must keep my visit a secret," whispered the gentle Sunbeam. "I and my Sisters like to carry on our work in our own way, without being watched by any one"

"Such a quantity of happy children

And then Princess Crystal found herself alone, with the Sunbeam's parting caress still warm upon her cheek.

"How delicious it was up there!" sighed the Princess softly. And the great yellow roses nodded their heads together; they seemed to know all about it.

The next afternoon the Sunbeam again stole in through the window, bringing sight and healing in her soft silver rays, and the Princess took her second journey up through the clear blue sky.

When her feet touched, at length, the green lawn of the Beautiful Gardens, her fairy friend led her by the hand to a seat in a quiet, shady little dell, and Princess Crystal noticed again that she looked sad, and her voice, when she spoke, was low and mournful.

"Princess," she said, "I am now about to tell you what I tell to every child who visits this kingdom. On the other side of yonder distant hills lies the Country of the Shadows. There are great dark forests there, where the breezes and the light never come; hills that weary feet find very hard to climb, and ice-cold rivers which must be crossed, and whose waters numb and chill the tired limbs. At the far north of this country is the Mountain of Obstacles, where the rocks are steep and the rolling stones are pointed and dangerous; and on the top of that Mountain grows the Tree of Healing which bears but one fruit, and that fruit is the cure for every ill."

The Sunbeam paused a moment, and Princess Crystal looked up with shining eyes.

"Can it make blind people see?" she asked. "Can it cure people who are lame?"

"It can cure everything," answered the Sunbeam gravely. "But oh, my child, it is hard to get! Beneath the tree sleeps the Enchanter,—the Black Dragon,—the Prince of Shadows, and he guards the tree against all who come."

"And has no one ever tried to get the fruit?" asked the Princess thoughtfully.

"Many have tried, my child, and many have failed," was the sorrowful reply. "To get the fruit, one must take the Sword of the Sunbeams and go bravely up the hill, looking neither to right nor left. The Dragon cannot withstand the touch of the magic sword, and his servants the Shadows, who do all they can to hinder travellers, are powerless before it. But"—and her voice grew graver still in warning—"should you allow terror to master you, should you turn back or look anywhere save straight in front of you, the sword will fall from your hand and the Dragon will claim his prey!"

"And does no one who has failed ever come back?" asked Princess Crystal, with wide-open eyes of horror.

"Yes, some of them have escaped," answered her fairy friend, in a low voice; "but they are very, very few. Oh, Princess, there are crowds of children beyond those mountains, whose lives are wearing away as slaves: children"—and she shuddered—"whose parents will never see their faces again. The air is too thin for you mortals to live in this country; but down in the mines where these children toil it is thick and dense, and one may live for ever, working on, deep, deep below the ground."

"But those who come back," asked the Princess again, "are they still blind, dumb, or ill, as they were before?"

The cloud cleared a little from the Sunbeam's face.

"No, Princess," she said. "that is the one spot of brightness in this terribly sad story. The roots of the Healing Tree grow in the mines, and they send their curing power out into the air. Those who breathe that air return here—if they *ever do* return—healed."

A deep sigh escaped the tender-hearted little Princess at the Sunbeam's last words, but she did not speak, and the Fairy went on:

"There is one more secret about this tree, which I may not reveal. Your own heart must teach it you; no one else can. I am forced to tell this to every child who comes here, though it wrings my very heart to see them set off on their dangerous journey. Will you set forth on it, little one, or will you rest content to come here from time to time and still remain blind and lame on earth?"

There was a moment's pause. Then—"I must think," said the Princess, and her voice trembled; "oh, I must think! I cannot tell now; but oh, I am afraid! I dare not face that terrible Mountain!"

The Sunbeam bent down and kissed her.

"Ah, Princess!" she said, "if I could—if I dared—I would persuade you against it; but I may not. There is a power which governs even us spirits of the air."

And then Princess Crystal slowly left the dell and joined her playmates. But her mind was full of one thing only, and a mournful wail seemed floating on the breeze—the wail of the children beyond the Mountains, a sad, sad appeal for help and deliverance.

It haunted the Princess all the while she remained in the Beautiful Gardens; and when she found herself back again on earth, on the couch by the window, her darkened sight was peopled by sad, wan little faces, whose hungry, despairing eyes were fixed imploringly on hers. For some hours the Princess lay, lost in thought, her golden hair spread in a network over the velvet cushions, and her eyelashes making a dark shadow upon her soft pink cheek.

She heard the door open softly, and the sweep of her mother's silken gown on the soft carpet.

"She is asleep," said the Queen softly, bending over her little daughter.

And the Princess, who wanted to be alone with her thoughts for a little, pretended to be sleeping in truth, and kept silent.

"My treasure—my poor little Crystal!" went on the Queen tenderly, while her deft fingers rearranged the embroidered shawl which covered the couch. "Is she not beautiful, Sire?"

The Princess suddenly became aware that there was some one else in the room;

"'My poor little Crystal!' went on the Queen tenderly"

but it was too late to wake now, so she lay quite still, and tried hard not to hear what was being said. That is a difficult thing to do, though, when the speakers are so close, and especially when it is oneself they are discussing.

"She is beautiful indeed," answered another voice, a clear, low-toned voice which pleased the Princess well. "It is as the face of an angel"; and then followed a deep sigh.

"You sigh, Sire?" said the Queen again. "Ah, you may well pity her, my poor little daughter!"

"I sigh not only for her Highness, but for myself," answered the Emperor (for he the Princess guessed it must be). "Hers is such a face as I have often pictured my future bride would possess, and now I shall never marry."

"And why, Sire?" asked the Queen, in surprise. "Surely there is many a face as fair, many a soul as sweet and good, though I, her mother, should be slow to own it."

"Having seen the Princess Crystal, I shall never marry," repeated the Emperor mournfully. "Such love, such worship as I can give, has sprung forth at sight of her, and hers it will be for ever! I cannot ask her to be my bride, for if I marry it must be to please my people as well as myself. The great lords of my empire are very powerful, and I cannot displease them. They would want an empress who could move amongst them and make her presence felt. Such I never can and never shall give them. My heart is no longer mine to offer."

He sighed again, and Princess Crystal felt her heart throb with pity for him and for herself.

She heard her mother speak again—sadly, regretfully, as she turned to go; but the Emperor lingered a moment, and, lifting the little hand that lay motionless on the gold-embroidered coverlet, he pressed it reverently to his lips. "Farewell, sweet Crystal, my Princess!" he said softly. And then Princess Crystal was left once more alone, but her brain was no longer perplexed in a whirl of thoughts. The sad, wan faces still floated about her in the darkness, but the cry of the children beyond the mountains was no longer a reproachful cry,—she had made up her mind.

* * * * * * *

For the third time the Sunbeam came again; and her beautiful face was glad, for she hoped that her little friend had given up the idea of the terrible journey.

But when they were once more in the Land of Sunbeams, Princess Crystal looked up with a brave smile and a great light in her eyes.

"I will go—I have decided," she said simply.

And the glad look passed from the Sunbeam's face, and two great tears fell from her eyes on to Princess Crystal's golden hair, where they lay like diamonds and sent out rays of silver light.

She led the child silently to the top of the hills that divided the Bright Kingdom from the Country of Shadows, and there she took the magic sword from her girdle and put it in the hand of the Princess. Then she pointed to where the glorious Sun hung like a ball of fire in the heavens.

"You have a long journey before you, little one," she said. "Make all the speed you may, for it must be ended before yonder sun has dipped behind the mountains. Longer than that you cannot spend in this atmosphere. May you return in safety. Go, my child: every moment is precious."

She pressed a farewell kiss on Princess Crystal's forehead, and then, sword in hand, the child set forth alone on her dangerous adventure.

At the bottom of the hill she stopped, and turned to wave a last farewell to her friend.

The beautiful spirit was still standing, clear against the sky, with her hands clasped and her eyes raised, as if imploring help and guidance for the little adventuress.

"What a change this is from the Sunbeam country!" thought the Princess, as she went hopefully on.

A grey sort of twilight reigned everywhere. No sun rays penetrated here. The Sun himself was barely visible—shadowed and eclipsed by the mists and clouds that floated round. Straight in front stretched a thick black forest. Oh, how gloomy it was! How terribly, fearfully silent! Not a sound, not even the falling of leaf or twig, broke the awful stillness. Her own footsteps seemed to echo and re-echo down the forest aisles and among the arched tree trunks, and struck terror into Princess Crystal's heart. It was like a city of the dead; nothing stirring, nothing alive—deserted, and yet *not* deserted! It was this last feeling that drove the Princess frantically forward, hardly daring to breathe, and grasping tightly the Sunbeam's sword as the only thing that gave her any sense of safety.

She knew very well what that feeling was. Around her, though she could not see them, the Shadows were hovering; their soundless whispers filled the air, their baleful eyes were watching

"She took the magic sword from her girdle, and put it in the hand of the Princess."

"She cautiously ventured one foot into the black-looking water

—always watching! She felt them fixed on her; she knew they were waiting their opportunity.

Out again she came at last, with a great sigh of relief—out into a vast deserted plain covered with rocks and brambles. Here too the Shadows followed, but the troubles of her way counterbalanced somewhat the terror they filled her with.

The rocks cut her thin shoes and the brambles tore her stockings, but she trudged on bravely. On and on for hours, so it seemed to her. Would this dreary waste never come to an end? Ah! there was the gleam of water in the distance! And with renewed courage the Princess made her way at last to the bank of a mighty river. But such a river! Those she had seen in the Beautiful Gardens were clear and rippling: this was dark, sullen and treacherous-looking. Ah! it made one shiver. The Princess glanced despairingly up and down the bank, but there was neither bridge nor boat. She sat down, and, slipping off her shoes and stockings, threw them away: they were useless now—ragged and torn till they were no protection at all to the tender white skin, which was already scarred and bleeding.

She stood up, and cautiously ventured one foot into the black-looking water. It was not so deep as she had thought—in fact, it barely reached to her knees; but, oh! it was bitterly cold, and rushed past with such icy force that she could barely make her way against it. Her small feet were half frozen and aching painfully by the time she mounted the opposite bank, and the pebbles had cut them badly.

But she set her face steadfastly northwards, and clambered over the sharp pointed rocks and prickly grass, vainly trying to shut her ears to the whispers that grew louder and more threatening as she proceeded.

How she managed the rest of her journey she never clearly remembered. She travelled as though in some strange, terrible dream—through more forests, across more dreary plains, through thorny thickets and bogs which seemed to chain and hold back her feet, till at last, weary and faint, with aching, bleeding limbs, and torn, soiled clothes, she reached the foot of the Great Mountain, and the whispering ceased and the Shadows fled away.

Remembering the Sunbeam's injunction, she began to climb up, looking neither to right nor left. How the stones rolled beneath her feet! It was dreadfully hard work, and when she reached a grassy spot her troubles only increased; so steep and slippery was it that for some distance the Princess was forced to crawl upwards on hands and knees.

Hark! what was that sound? A dull, monotonous "tack" and "thud," that seemed to come from miles below her. Princess Crystal guessed what it must be: it was the Slave Children working in the mines beneath the mountain. "Tack! thud! tack! thud!" The noise formed itself into a sort of cry: "Help! help! help!" It seemed to wail in the distance, and tears, which the thorns and bruises of her way had never brought there, welled up into the blue eyes of the little Princess.

Upwards still. She could see the wonderful tree now—far up on the rocky heights; and the sight gave her fresh courage. There was no sign as yet of the terrible dragon she had been warned against, but her heart beat fast with a sense of coming danger.

What was that in the distance?—a human being? What could any one be doing here in these solitudes? Who could it be? She was close to the figure now—a man, clad richly though sombrely in black, and standing straight in the path that led up the mountain. He was looking down towards the Princess, and she saw that he was tall and handsome, with a somewhat sinister face and dark, thoughtful eyes.

"Child," he said as she approached, in a slow, gentle voice, "what do you seek? and why are you here in these lonely wilds?"

"I seek the Fruit of Healing," answered Princess Crystal boldly, still advancing, with her blue eyes raised fearlessly to the stranger.

"Go back!" he returned mournfully. "Why should you risk your life in vain? Retrace your steps before it is too late."

A swift feeling of mistrust took possession of the Princess. This could be no friend who gave her such dangerous advice. She made no answer, and pressed on

"The stranger vanished, and in his place she distinguished the form of an enormous dragon"

The stranger's face changed. An evil spark shot from his sombre eyes, and he stretched out his arm to bar her passage.

Instinctively Princess Crystal raised her sword, and it was well she did so. The next moment a terrific yell—so close that she almost started back in terror—shook the mountains. The air was filled with smoke and flame, amidst which the stranger vanished, and in his place she distinguished the form of an enormous dragon. His baleful eyes shone upon her with a lurid light, and fire issued from his throat, as he leapt and curved around her, enveloping her in a whirl like a heated furnace.

Blinded, deafened and half suffocated, she stumbled forward, feeling in her terror that her only safety lay in advancing. She felt the point of her sword touch something yielding, and a yell arose more deafening than the first. There was a swift rushing of air, the smoke and fire cleared away, and Princess Crystal dropped exhausted but triumphant beneath the branches of the Tree of Healing.

Just within reach of her arm hung a tiny, pear-shaped object—so small that at first she could hardly believe it to be the fruit which possessed such magic healing powers. But there was none other on the tree, so she plucked it almost reverently, and gazed at it for some moments in awestruck wonder.

A new idea had flashed across her brain. It was so very, very small! Surely there would not be enough for more than one person, she thought. And, oh!

what a quantity of children were playing now in the Beautiful Gardens—little ones, all of them ailing in one way or another—to whom this magic fruit would bring almost a new life!

The Princess held it carefully in her hand, and heaved a long, regretful sigh.

"I will not eat it," she said at last aloud, "I will take it back with me. The Sunbeam will tell me to whom to give it: she knows all about the lives of these other children, and she will choose for me one of those whose homes are not so happy as mine."

No thought came into the child's unselfish heart that she had taken her long journey for nothing. Oh no! she had come to find the Fruit of Healing, and she had found it. If it did her no good, it would do good to some other who needed it more than she. Dear little Princess! The prize she won at last was surely a well-deserved one.

She hid her treasure carefully in the bosom of her gown, and started to her feet.

There remained yet one part of her mission to be accomplished—the release of the poor little captives who toiled in the mines. How to find them, even, the Princess knew not; but she felt that somehow or other the way would be shown her.

She gave one glance towards the Sun, but he had hardly moved in his course,—in fact, her terrible journey, which seemed to have lasted so many weary hours, had really taken only a short time. Time goes much slower in the Kingdom of Shadows than it does on the earth below.

"Tack! thud! tack! thud!" She could hear it again—right beneath her feet. And now she began her search among the rocks and boulders that crowned the Mountain behind the Tree of Healing. There must be an opening somewhere about here, she thought.

She had not gone far before she came on a sight that made her heart leap to her mouth, as the saying is: there on the ground was a deep crimson stain—the trail of blood!

For one moment she stood as though turned to stone, her eyes on that dreadful mark which proved danger to be so near, her ears keenly on the alert to catch any ill-omened sound.

All was still, save for the monotonous echo from the mines below.

Princess Crystal set her teeth firmly, and began to follow up the ominous trail at her feet. Her breath came quick and fast. In some places the soil was loose and sandy, and the print of a man's foot was easy to be distinguished. She was drawing nearer to danger, and she knew it.

She turned the corner of one of the gigantic rocks, and there before her in the mountain side yawned a huge, black cavernous hole; and the red trail at her feet led straight into the dark opening. Who shall blame our little adventuress if for a moment her heart failed her, and she clasped her hands together with a quick, despairing cry? Only for a moment, though. Above the beating of her heart arose the cry of the little captives. Had she come so far only to fail them at the last? No, never, never!

With a little gasp, and quivering in every nerve, the Princess walked up to the black opening, and plunged, from the twilight realms above, to the deeper, unknown gloom below.

How close and black it was, and how the ground slanted—down, down, down! But the "tack! thud!" was growing every moment louder and clearer. Hark! another sound! or was it only the quick coming and going of her own breath?

There it was again! Yes, she was not alone in this underground vault; some

"The Princess walked up to the black opening

one was here, not far from her; some one in pain, for now a low moan struck upon her ear.

A ray of light pierced the darkness, some distance to her left, and towards this light Princess Crystal slowly groped her way. Suddenly it streamed out brighter than before, and its rays revealed a dark stain upon the sandy floor!

It was too late to turn back. there, just before her, stood the stranger she had met on the mountain — the Prince of Shadows, the Dragon, the Enchanter himself. He was paler than before, and his right arm was hanging useless at his side.

"Welcome, Princess," he said, with a mocking bow, and Princess Crystal thought that no mortal face could ever look so wicked, no mortal eyes flash such vengeful fire as shot from his · "you have conquered this time, and I honour you for your victory. What more does your Highness seek in my dominions?"

"I seek my friends, whom you have kept here," she answered boldly, though at heart she felt terribly frightened

The Enchanter surveyed his small antagonist curiously. "You shall see them," he said at last, raising the lighted torch in his left hand. "Lead straight on, and and I will follow."

The Princess drew back quickly. There was a malicious gleam in his eyes which did not please her

"No," she said decidedly, her fingers tightening on the hilt of her sword. "I will follow; you shall lead."

Without a word the Enchanter preceded her down the long passage, their shadows forming quaint, uncanny shapes in the flickering light of the torch. The narrow way widened as they went, till the torch gleamed upon the black, stagnant waters of a sleeping pool. A rusty iron chain was fastened to the rocky wall, and at the end of it hung a metal cup.

Princess Crystal's guide stopped, and unfastening the cup, dipped it in the pool and handed it to the child

"Down yonder," he said, pointing to where the passage again grew lower and narrower, "the air is difficult to breathe. Drink this! it will give you power to bear it"

The Princess took the cup and gazed at it doubtfully. She felt the Enchanter's eyes fixed upon her; but even as she gazed, the cry from the mines seemed to ring fainter and fainter in her ears, and a pale child's face gazed reproachfully at her from the depths of the cup.

She shook her head, and put it hastily away from her. Her companion flung his torch to the ground, muttering a fierce exclamation.

In a moment the cave was almost in darkness, and Princess Crystal placed her back against the wall, waiting with beating heart for what would follow. Two fierce eyes gleamed on her out of the gloom, and the air was full of a sulphurous smoke that nearly choked her. Then the yell of the Dragon sounded once more in her ears, as his fiery form leapt towards her, showering sparks of light around the cave. Again and again did he come to the attack, and again and again the magic sword met and checked his bound. Princess Crystal's arm began to grow weary and her brain to whirl. She felt she could not hold out much longer, and in an agony of despair, hardly knowing what she did, she caught up the metal cup and flung it with all her remaining force at the foe.

There was a long-drawn howl, that echoed and re-echoed down the vaulted cavern, a heavy fall,—and then dead silence.

As the air cleared, the Princess saw, by the feeble light of the torch, which still flickered where it had been thrown down, her enemy, once more in his human shape, lying motionless upon the ground. Timidly she advanced and bent over him; but he was harmless now—for a time at least—breathing heavily, with closed eyes and parted lips.

The empty metal cup lay beside him on the sand, and its contents had been sprinkled over him.

He had fallen into his own trap; the water with which he would have drugged the Princess had taken effect on himself, and he lay, peaceful and harmless for the first time in his wicked life, beside the waters of the Pool of Sleep.

Princess Crystal, with a deep sigh of thankfulness, detached the keys that hung at his belt, picked up the torch and hurried on.

All was silent, save for the "tack! thud!" growing louder and louder in the distance.

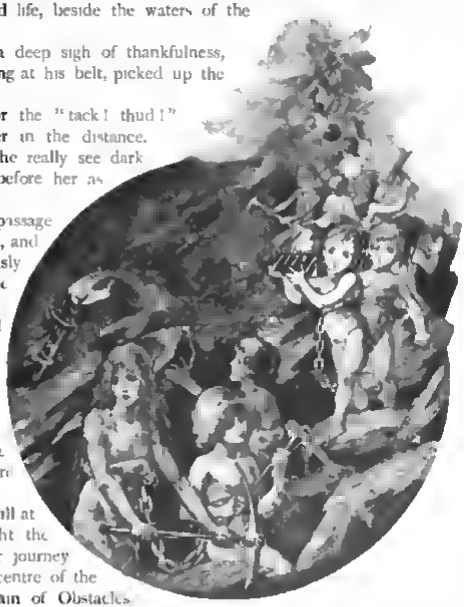
Was it fancy, or did she really see dark shadowy forms retreating before her as she advanced?

On and on, till the passage ended in rough-hewn steps, and the Princess began cautiously to descend, sword in one hand, torch in the other.

Another passage, and again more steps. It was enough to make one shudder, when one thought how far this must be below the surface of the ground! The air began to strike chill, and the walls were damp and cold.

Down! down! down! till at last a sudden turn brought the Princess to the end of her journey. She had reached the very centre of the mines beneath the Mountain of Obstacles.

Stretching far away before her into the



"Gangs of workers . . . chained two and two."

distance was a huge vaulted cavern; the gloom, relieved only by the red glow of one or two torches, was positively appalling. The walls and floor were broken up in places, and at these places gangs of workers were toiling, chained two and two with heavy chains that clanked as they moved, and making with their axes the dull sounds that had reached the Princess from overhead.

And oh! words are powerless to describe the terrible, weary hopelessness of those young faces! For they were all young; some, indeed, barely out of babyhood,—age stands still in the mines beneath the Mountain,—but all, boys and girls alike, had wan, haggard features, and dull, listless eyes.

The Princess stood on the steps and gazed with a heart that swelled with pity.

None of them looked up; no doubt they had heard her footsteps, but they had given up hoping now for the release that never came; and so they worked on dreamily, monotonously, never dreaming that help was so very near.

A great sob burst from the depths of Princess Crystal's heart. "Oh, poor things! poor things!" she exclaimed aloud, and her sweet young voice, trembling with compassion, rang down the great vault to its farthest end.

The clank of chains and thud of axes stopped simultaneously. Had those dark walls ever before echoed to the gentle sounds of pity, or was it so long, long ago, that they had forgotten all about it?

All eyes were lifted to the place whence came the voice; and there, on the steps, stood what seemed to the long-forgotten, desolate little ones, a beautiful spirit from the light and air above,—an angel with floating hair and tear-shining blue eyes.

In another moment she was in the midst of them, pitying, comforting, reassuring; while faint smiles of coming happiness dawned on childish lips that had not smiled for years, and little, woeful, longing-eyed babies felt once more the touch of a soft caressing arm.

The Enchanter's keys did good work for once, that day. Soon chains and padlocks lay in heaps on the dark, damp earth, and the great vault was left silent and deserted.

The little captives it had held so long, hand right clasping hand, with the light of a hope that seemed almost too glad and great to be true shining on their worn little faces, and breaking up the despair of the resigned apathy into which they had fallen, were following their sweet-faced, brave-eyed deliverer up the steps they had descended once, so long—oh! so long ago.

Up and up, along the great passage and by the Pool of Sleep, they passed.

The Enchanter still lay as he had fallen, and the children passed him by with bated breath. Princess Crystal paused an instant, and hurled the heavy bunch of keys far out into the middle of the stagnant waters, where the bubbles rose as they sank gurgling to the bottom.

Then they journeyed on, out into the twilight air, and down the rocky mountain side.

For the second time that day the Princess crossed the space of dreary land that lay between the Tree of Healing and the hills of the Sunbeam Country. The sun was still up in the heavens, when at last they came in sight of those hills which had seen so many children set out and so terribly few return!

A group of shining, white-robed forms stood waiting there, and a loud sweet song of triumph went up, pealing to the skies, as the weary children came toiling up the hill.

Before one pair of blue eyes, Sunbeams, hills and companions seemed to move in a bewildering maze; and Princess Crystal took one or two faltering steps forward, and then fell fainting into the arms of her fairy friend.

When she recovered her senses, she found herself lying on the ground with her

head resting on the Sunbeam's knee. She sat up wearily, and looked around her. All the other children were gone.

"Yes," said the Sunbeam, interpreting her thoughts, "my sisters have taken all the little ones down to their homes. Oh, Princess! there is many a voice will bless you to-night, many a heart you have filled with joy!"

The Princess put her hand to her forehead

"Ah! I remember now," she said, as she glanced down at her bruised and bleeding feet "And the fruit—oh yes, I've brought it back You never told me it was so very small You will show me whom to give it to, won't you? Some one who hasn't such a happy home as I have."

She took the precious treasure from her bosom and put it confidently into the Sunbeam's hand

"My child," said the Spirit—and Princess Crystal remembered all her life the solemn gladness in her voice—"you have learnt the great secret of which I told you Had you kept the fruit for yourself it would have done you no good, but now its magic has been blessed with

"The edge of the Sunbeam Kingdom"

the blessing of an unselfish desire. Eat it, my child, and be cured of every ill. Its magic has no power save for the one who plucked it.'

The Princess took her treasure back, with round eyes of wonder. She did not see herself that she had been so very unselfish (truly unselfish people never do), but she ate the fruit as she was bidden, and felt new life spread in her weary limbs.

And now, at that very moment, the sun sank and disappeared behind the distant hills.

The Sunbeam rose with a cry of dismay. "Come, Princess!" she cried, taking the child by the hand, "come quickly! You have been far too long here already: see, the sun has sunk, and I cannot go down to earth now! You must descend alone: come!"

Along the beautiful gardens they sped, straight on to the very edge of the Sunbeam Kingdom

"Jump!" cried the Sunbeam imperatively; and Princess Crystal shut her eyes and sprang out into the empty air.

* * * * * *

Down below in the Palace every one was in terrible trouble. Princess Crystal was missing.—the couch by the window was empty. Every member of the Court,—nay, every citizen of the Royal City,—had been out searching, but no trace of the missing Princess could be discovered.

"She must have been stolen," was the general opinion; "how else could she have got away?"

"Crystal my precious, where have you been?"

Messages were sent all over the country, and the King and Queen were nearly distracted with grief; the Emperor was, if possible, even more upset. Nobody slept a wink that night, and when the first morning Sunbeam crept into the Emperor's room, it found him sitting by the window, with his face buried in his hands. The Sunbeam rested gently on his dark, bent head: and was it fancy, or did a voice really bid him, in a soft whisper, "search the gardens once more"?

Anyhow, whether it were fancy or not, it had such an effect upon him that he rose and went quietly out into the garden by himself.

You can all guess what he found there. Fast asleep under a great tree, with her golden head pillowed upon her arm, lay the little missing Princess. Just as the

Emperor caught sight of her she began to awake, and, sitting up, opened her big blue eyes, wondering for the moment where she was.

"Crystal! my Princess!" cried the Emperor joyfully; and then she saw him, and recognised his voice. She rose quickly to her feet and came to meet him, looking so exquisitely lovely that he quite forgot the fact that he had never been introduced, and just took her in his arms and kissed her again and again! And she,—well, I don't think she minded a bit,—for it was love at first sight, on both sides, you see!

And what an excitement there was after that, you can just imagine! and how enchanted the King and Queen were, when they saw the Princess and heard the wonderful news she had to tell, and how half the mothers in the kingdom came in a crowd to the Palace gates, that they might see their Princess and call down blessings on her name; and how after that the whole country joined in one great feast, at the wedding of the Emperor and the Princess Crystal, and how a certain Sunbeam stole in through the altar window, and lighted in blessing on the golden head of the sweet, fair-faced little bride!

DOROTHY STEPHENS.

THE DEVIL STONE

IT was in the dusky, tepid twilight of a particularly hot, vaporous, drowsy day at Aix-les-bains, in Savoy, that I passed through the hotel garden, and prepared to take a languid stroll through the streets of the little town. I was tired of having nothing to do and no one to talk to; the other people staying at the Hotel de l'Europe were mostly foreigners, and, apart from that, entirely uninteresting; and as to my father, he was almost a nonentity to me at present, till his "course" was completed. From early morn to dewy eve he was immersed in the waters, either outwardly or inwardly, or both; and beyond occasional glimpses of him, arrayed in a costume resembling that of an Arab sheikh, being conveyed in pomp and a sedan chair to or from the baths, I was, figuratively speaking, an orphan until *table d'hôte*.

As I crossed the verandah some one rose from a long chair, and, throwing his book down, said, "Where are you going, Miss Durant? May I come too?"

"If you like," I answered, politely but indifferently; "I am only going to look for spoons."

"For —?"

"Spoons. I am collecting, you know, it is something to do—and one can always give them away when one is tired of them."

So we sauntered along, side by side, and as we did so I began to feel less bored, and more reconciled to the trouble of existence, and finally amused and interested and flattered.

For this quiet-looking middle-aged man—to whom my father had introduced me two days before, as an old friend of his, and whom I had mentally summed up as "Rather handsome, clever perhaps, conceited possibly, and married probably"—was making himself agreeable as only a cultivated, polished man of the world, who wishes to make a favourable impression, can, and gradually I found myself acknowledging that his dark, intellectual face, with its crown of waving, iron-grey hair, was something more than handsome, and that his cleverness was sufficient to carry him beyond

"'May I come too?'"

conceit, while apparently it did not set him above a very evident enjoyment of a girl's society and conversation. He had already learnt most of my tastes and occupations, and drawn from me, by a magnetic sympathy, some confessions as to my inmost thoughts and aspirations, telling me in return that he was travelling wearily in search of rest, authoritatively ordered by his doctor, and he was deploring his lonely bachelorhood, when my attention was attracted by some quaint spoons half hidden amongst other old dull silver things in a forsaken-looking little shop to which our wanderings had led us through narrow, dingy byways. "I wonder how much they are," I said; and, asking me to wait outside, Colonel Haughton disappeared into the obscure interior. I remained gazing through the window for a moment, then, impelled by what idle impulse I know not, I walked slowly on.

The sound of a casement opening just over my head and a feminine laugh arrested me, and I looked up. It was a curious laugh, low and controlled, but with a malicious mockery in it that seemed a fit ending to some scathing speech; and just inside the open lattice, her arms resting on the sill and chin dropped lightly on her clasped hands, leant the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. It was but a glimpse of auburn hair on a white forehead, of eyes like brown pansies, and parted lips that looked like scarlet petals against the perfect pallor of her rounded cheeks, but it is photographed for ever on my brain. For, as I looked, a man's hand and arm, brown, lean, and supple, with the nervous fingers, on one of which a green stone flashed, clutching a poniard, came round her neck, and plunged the dagger, slantingwise, deep down into her heart. The smile on the beautiful lips quivered and fixed, but no sound came from them, and the eyes turned up and closed; and as she swayed towards the open window, the spell that was upon me broke, and with a shuddering cry I fled. On, on—blindly, madly,

desperately—with no sense or thought or feeling save an overwhelming horror. A red mist seemed to close round me and wall me in, and as I fought against it I felt my strength fail, and all was dark and still.

* * * * * *

Somewhere in the darkness a voice speaking, the touch of a hand on my face, a glimpse of light, a sense of pain that some one was suffering, then consciousness and memory. My father's anxious face bent over me, and his voice, as though from a distance, said, "Theo, are you better, dear? No, don't get up—rest, and take this." And, sinking back, I vaguely understood that I was in my own room

"A man's head and arm, brown, lean, and supple, . . . came round her neck!"

at the hotel, and that a stranger, a doctor no doubt, was present. He enjoined absolute quiet till he saw me again, and asked that he should be informed at once if there was any recurrence of fainting. Later, when I was in a condition to explain the origin of this attack, he would be able to prescribe for me. The light of dawn was struggling through the curtains, and I knew that I must have been unconscious for many hours. With the effort to banish all recollection of the terrible scene I had witnessed, came lethargy, and later, deep and dreamless sleep

Some days of seclusion and rest partially restored my health and spirits, and I began to feel that what had passed had been a sort of evil dream, a terror that

were best forgotten. My father when he heard my story was at first incredulous; then, impressed in spite of himself by my earnestness, he gave an unwilling belief to it, but he entreated me to mention it to no one save himself. He could find no account of a murder in the local papers, nor could he ascertain whether the tragedy I saw was known to have taken place, and as he did not wish my name to be introduced in any inquiry he allowed the matter to drop. To him I spoke of it no more, but the remembrance of it would not be wholly banished. I was haunted by the sight of that lovely face, and the sound of that laugh with its dreadful sequel. And a strange fancy had come to me also that the face was in some way familiar to me; I would lie with closed eyes for hours, seeking in vain to recall the resemblance that just eluded me. One day meditating thus I roused myself from my reverie, and met my own reflection in a mirror that hung opposite. Breathless I gazed, while a new terror took possession of me. There was the resemblance I had sought, there were the auburn hair, the deep dark eyes, the colourless face with scarlet lips just parted. Not so beautiful, perhaps, as the one I had seen at the window, indeed, as I gradually comprehended it was myself I gazed upon, I could see no beauty in the familiar features, but so like—so wonderfully, terribly like! And then for the first time I began to doubt the reality of my vision, and to long eagerly for the power to put it from me. I determined to rest and dream no longer, and that afternoon I descended to the garden.

"At last!" said Colonel Haughton, taking both my hands. "I thought we were never going to see you again. I have been reproaching myself with having overtired you that day—with having left you. I had no intention of remaining away from you for more than a moment, and I want to explain what detained me. When I came out and found you gone, I concluded you had returned here, and hurrying on I was fortunate enough to reach you just before you fainted. Your father tells me you have had a touch of malaria, and I hope—— But I distress you, Miss Durant; I am tiring you. Let me find you a comfortable chair and leave you to rest."

"No, no," I cried eagerly; "stay,—I will sit here. Tell me, where did you get that ring?"

On his finger shone a curious green stone, that seemed the counterpart of the one I had noticed on the hand that held the dagger.

"That is exactly what I want to tell you," he said. "After getting your spoons for you, I noticed, resting on a carved bracket, this ring. It is a very curious stone. You see it looks quite dull now, yet it can sparkle with all the brilliancy of a diamond. And on the back of it is cut part of the head of a snake. I have only seen a ring like this once before, and that was long ago in a hill temple in India. They called it the Devil Stone, and worshipped it, and they told me the tradition of it. Centuries before, this stone had been discovered by a holy man, embedded in a sacred relic, and he made a shrine for it, whence it was stolen by robbers. The next stage in its history was its division into two equal parts by a Maharajah, who had them set into rings, one of which he wore always himself, and the other he bestowed on his Maharanee, whom he loved greatly. One day he found it missing from her finger, and in a fit of jealousy he killed her, afterwards destroying himself. His ring passed into the possession of the Brahmins, but hers could never be traced. They say that eventually the two will be reunited, and that until this happens the lost ring will fulfil its mission. It is supposed to impel its wearer to deeds of violence, and to his own destruction, and when the evil spirit within it is gratified, it flashes and sparkles. They say, too, that if you cast it from you, you throw away with it the greatest happiness of your life and

lose the chance of it for ever. Yet, if you wear it, it dominates your fate. The instant I saw it, I recognised the lost ring, and asked the man his price for it. He refused to tell me—said it was not for sale; and I left the shop, because I did not wish to keep you waiting longer, but I returned next day, and succeeded in obtaining it. The old man, a curious old Italian, was very reticent about it, but he seemed to have gathered some knowledge of the tradition, and said it had the "evil eye," and was neither good to sell nor to wear. It had been sold to him by a compatriot, he said, who had a dark history—a man who was ever too ready with his knife, and who had come to a bad end. I told him I would steal it, and he might charge me what he liked for some other purchases, so we settled it that way."

"Are you not afraid to wear it?" I asked. "It makes me shudder to look at it. There is some deadly fascination about it, I am sure."

"I am afraid of nothing," he said lightly, "except your displeasure, Miss Theo. If it annoys you I will not wear it, but I confess it has a very great fascination for me. I do not believe in superstition, but I like the stone for its antiquity and strange history. Some day I will send it to my friends the Brahmins, meanwhile it inspires me with no evil propensity, and since it has interested you I am grateful to it so far."

So I resolved to put the ring and its story out of my mind, and to occupy myself only with the new interest that had dawned upon my life. The next few days went by so happily, and it seemed so natural to me that Lionel Haughton should be always at my side, that I did not stay to ask myself the reason for our close companionship—yet I think within my heart of hearts I knew. And each day, each hour I spent with him, was bringing us nearer together and binding us with ties that would not easily be broken.

"Haughton is very much improved," said my father one day, "since I knew him many years ago—his brother was my great friend, and I did not see much of this one—he seems to have spent a good deal of his life in India, and I fancy it has affected his health. I suppose he won't return there. I must persuade him to come and pay us a visit when we go home, eh, Theo?"

One evening, when our stay was drawing to a close, we proposed to go to the Casino, where I wished to try my luck at gambling. "I am always lucky if things go by chance," I said, "and I have neglected my opportunity here sadly. Let us go and gamble to-night, and I will win fortunes for all of us." Colonel Haughton did not, however, join us as usual at *table d'hôte* that evening, and a note handed to me afterwards from him told me that he had been feeling ill, but was now better, and would meet us later at the Casino. It was the first time I had ever played, and before long it became apparent that my prophecy about my luck was being fulfilled. I won, and won, and won again, till a heap of gold and notes was in front of me, and I was the centre of all eyes at the table. I played recklessly, and yet I could not lose, till suddenly my attention was distracted by the arrival of Colonel Haughton, who leant over my shoulder and placed his stake next to mine. As he did so the ring seemed me to emit a faint sparkle, and I felt as if my careless good fortune had deserted me. I *wanted* to win now, whereas before I had played for the excitement only, with the true gambler spirit. And yet from that moment I lost. He also lost, heavily—so heavily that I wondered if he were rich enough to take it as philosophically as he appeared to. Nevertheless so large a sum had I won at first that, though much diminished, it was still a small fortune that I gathered up when we left the tables.

"You brought me bad luck," I said to Colonel Haughton, as we walked back to the hotel. "Do you know, I think it was your ring."

"I would never wear it again if I thought that," he answered. Then, as we reached the garden, and my father passed on to the salon, "Theo," he continued, "stay a moment. I have something to tell you. My darling, I love you. I love you more than life; will you try to care for me a little in return? I want you for my wife. I worship you!"

Ah, Lionel! beloved! it scarcely needed the assurance of your love for me to bring me the certainty of mine for you! If ever the gates of Heaven open to mortal eyes, they stood ajar for us that night; the starlit garden was changed into a veritable Eden, and we walked with wondering joy therein, and recked not of an angel with flaming sword, who waited silently to drive us from our Paradise into outer darkness.

* * * * * * *

It was scarcely noon, the following day, when we began the ascent of the Dent du Chat, one of the mountain peaks that tower above Aix.

"I feel as if I had wings, and must soar into a higher atmosphere," I had said gaily; "and since we cannot fly, let us climb. I want to reach the top of that mountain with you, and leave the world behind us. Let us go."

We were to ride up to a certain distance, and then dismount and gain the highest point on foot. Three guides accompanied us, following leisurely, talking and gesticulating to each other, and paying little heed to us, save an occasional frantic rush at the mules when we approached an awkward corner of the zigzag pathway, which had the effect of adding a momentary uncertainty and danger to our otherwise tranquil ascent. We were not sorry when, after two or three hours of this progress, the guides told us we must halt, and that they would remain in charge of the mules till we returned to them. It was rather a toilsome climb, and the sun was beating fiercely down upon us; but we felt rewarded when, not far from the top, we reached a plateau where we could rest, while a cool breeze from the distant snowy peaks revived us.

"Here is an arm-chair all ready for you," Lionel said, leading me to where a soft couch of mossy turf lay beneath the shadow of an upright, projecting piece of rock. A yard or two farther on, the precipitous side of the mountain descended, sheer and impassable down almost to its foot, terminating in a dark and narrow gorge between two ridges. Away on the left far below us nestled Aix, and by its side the Lac du Bourget, with its island monastery surrounded by water as blue as Geneva's own.

"How lovely it is!" I exclaimed, "I never knew before how beautiful life could be."

"Nor I," he answered; "I have been waiting for my wife to teach me." And then he told me of his life in India, and of many adventures he had had, and finally we spoke again of the ring and of my strange and sudden illness on that day.

"Some day I will tell you all about it," I said, "and why I have such a curious feeling against the ring. I wish you would not wear it, yet now that you possess it I have a sort of superstitious dread that, if you part from it, it will revenge itself upon you in some way. I am sure I saw it sparkle last night when the cards went against us. You were so terribly unlucky."

"Unlucky at cards, lucky in love," he quoted; but I noticed a shadow on his face. "What have you done with all your wealth, little gambler?—you have not had time to spend it yet."

"Here it is," I answered, drawing out my pocket-book, in which I had stuffed the notes, "but I have taken a dislike to it—I shall give it away, I think. I would rather be lucky in another way," and I laid it down beside me on the grass.

"'What is it, love? What can I do for you?"

"I will send the ring to India on my wedding day," Lionel exclaimed, "till then will you wear it for me?" and, drawing it from his finger, he was about to place it upon mine

But I would not allow him to do so, and laying it on the bank notes I said, "There's a contradiction' Good luck and bad luck side by side' Let us leave them there,' I added, half laughing, half in earnest, "and start again fresh"

He turned suddenly away, and, fearing he was vexed, I laid my hand upon his arm; but he shook it gently off, and then I saw he was singularly pale, and that his breathing was quick and short, and his eyes had a strangely troubled and intent look "Lionel, you are ill," I cried. "Oh, what is it, love? what can I do for you?"

"It is nothing," he said faintly, but his voice was changed "it will pass off. I will return to the guides and get some water. Wait here till I come back."

"Let me come with you," I entreated, but he shook his head, and said he was better and would be quite well if I would do as he wished, then he began the descent. I watched him for a few moments, till he was lost to view at a bend of the mountain, before returning to my seat But the sun had gone in, and it seemed cold and dark, and a dull heavy weight rested on my heart I was lonely there without him, and the moments dragged on slowly and drearily, till I felt the suspense and stillness unendurable

I decided I would wait only five minutes more and then I would follow him, and, leaning back wearily, I closed my eyes. A sort of faintness came over me—

"And it was Lionel!"

for I was tired, and the sudden change from perfect happiness to this anxiety, this vague alarm, had chilled and stupefied me.

It may have been a few moments after, or longer (I cannot tell), but I became aware suddenly that, although no sound of footsteps had reached me, there was some one near. I remained absolutely still and listened intently, and though there was no tangible movement or sound, there was an impalpable stir in the stillness round me, some vague breath that seemed to speak of danger. I felt paralysed with the same powerlessness that had seized me when the tragedy at the window was enacted before my eyes. It flashed into my mind that perhaps it was a thief, attracted by the notes and ring lying beside me, who had crept behind believing that

I slept My hand was almost touching them, and as I glanced down to see if I could reach them without moving I noticed with a thrill of indescribable horror that the green stone was sparkling brilliantly with a thousand rays of scintillating light.

And then—something stirred behind me, and round my neck crept a hand, holding a short sharp knife such as Indians carry, and poised it over my heart as if to strike. With an instantaneous desperate throb of agonised revolt against my impending fate, I grasped the ring and flung it towards the precipice As it flashed through the air the knife dropped, and the murderer sprang to the edge in a vain effort to catch the stone ere it fell He stumbled, missed his footing, and, with one terrible cry and his hands grasping the air wildly, he fell backwards into the abyss

And it was Lionel—my beloved!

* * * * * * *

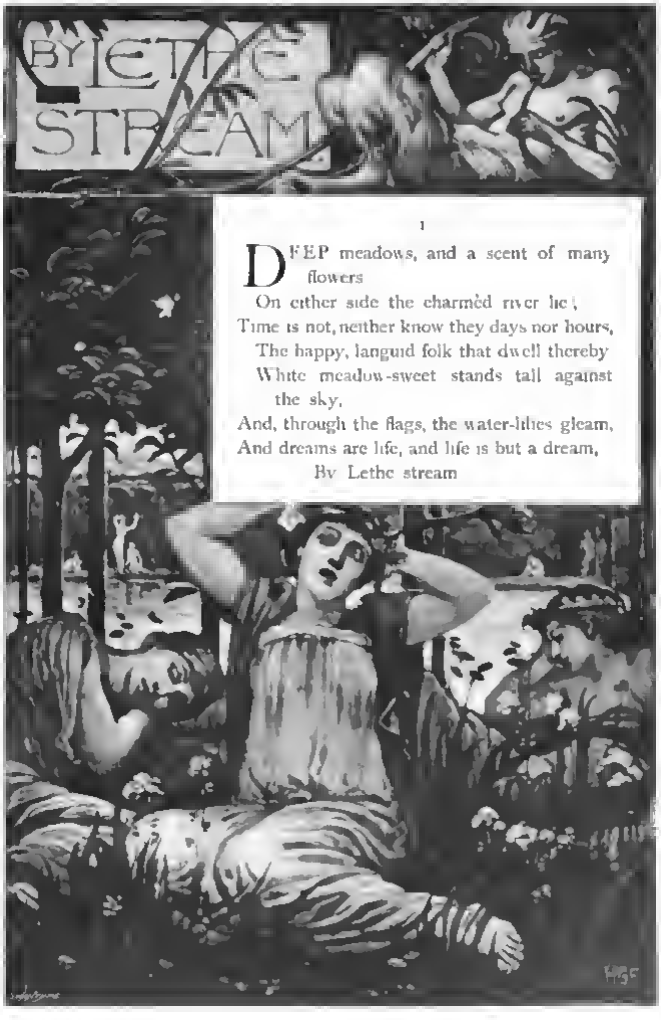
When the guides came to look for us I told them smilingly that the English gentleman had dropped his ring and in trying to find it had slipped and fallen over the precipice

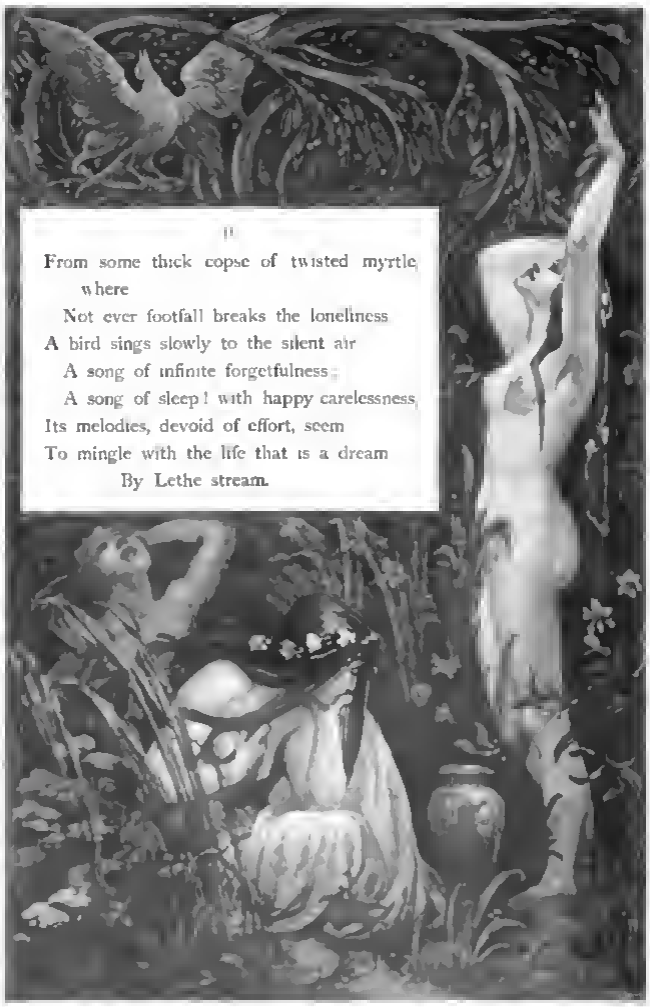
They led me down the mountain with reverent care and hushed steps and voices, for they said to each other, "Figure to yourself this English colonel was in love with the beautiful young lady, and he has perished before her eyes,—it is a terrible thing, and it has turned her brain"

And when my father told me gently, some days after, that they had found *him* and he was to be buried that day in the little cemetery, I laughed outright

But I have never smiled since—and I am quite sane now—only I think I have done with laughter for the rest of my life And I sometimes wonder why these things should have been, and if there is any explanation of them, save one

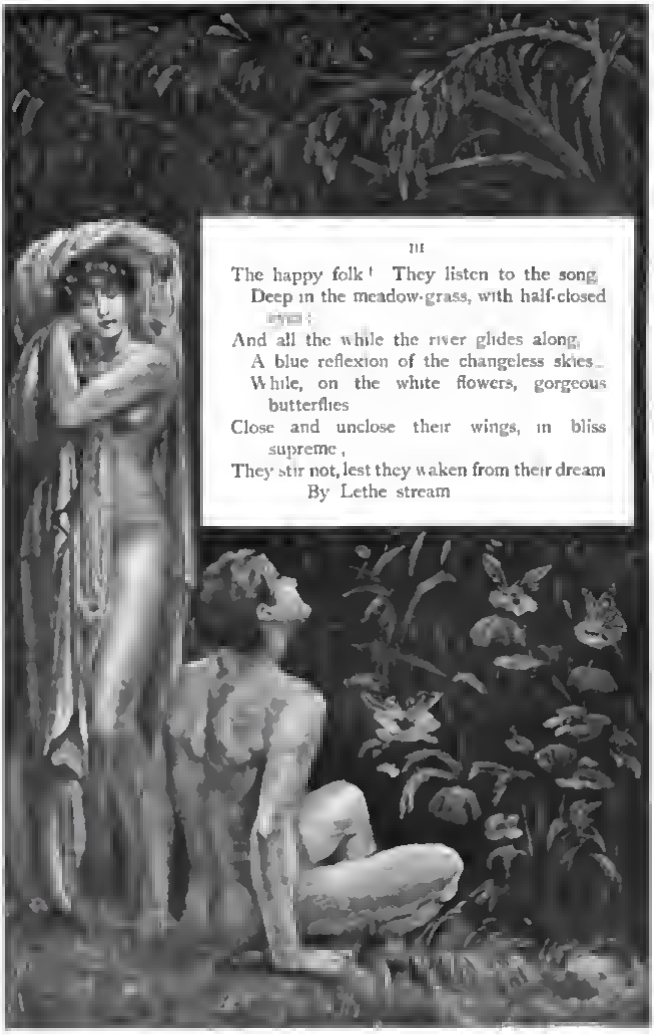
BEATRICE HERON MAXWELL.


BY LETHE STREAM
I
DEEP meadows, and a scent of many flowers
On either side the charmèd river lie;
Time is not, neither know they days nor hours,
The happy, languid folk that dwell thereby
White meadow-sweet stands tall against the sky,
And, through the flags, the water-lilies gleam,
And dreams are life, and life is but a dream,
By Lethe stream



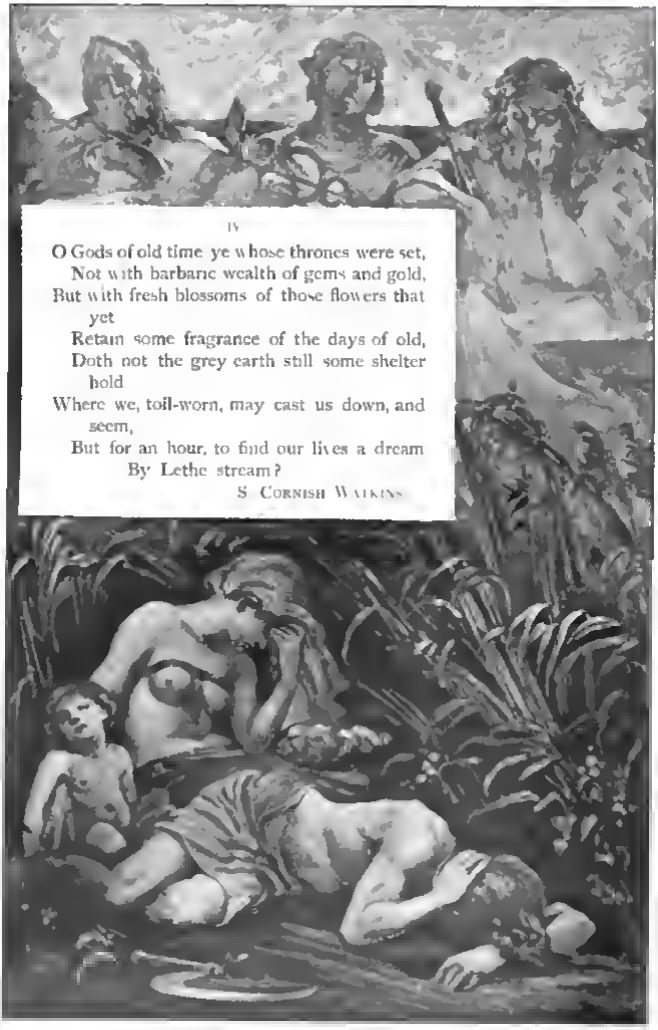
II

From some thick copse of twisted myrtle where
Not ever footfall breaks the loneliness
A bird sings slowly to the silent air
A song of infinite forgetfulness,
A song of sleep! with happy carelessness
Its melodies, devoid of effort, seem
To mingle with the life that is a dream
By Lethe stream.



III

The happy folk! They listen to the song
Deep in the meadow-grass, with half-closed eyes;
And all the while the river glides along,
A blue reflexion of the changeless skies.
While, on the white flowers, gorgeous butterflies
Close and unclose their wings, in bliss supreme,
They stir not, lest they waken from their dream
By Lethe stream



IV

O Gods of old time ye whose thrones were set,
Not with barbaric wealth of gems and gold,
But with fresh blossoms of those flowers that yet
Retain some fragrance of the days of old,
Doth not the grey earth still some shelter hold
Where we, toil-worn, may cast us down, and seem,
But for an hour, to find our lives a dream
By Lethe stream?

S. Cornish Watkins

"THE science of palmistry——'

Guy Barron's supercilious pause between the whiffs of his cigarette conveyed, more plainly than words, his compassionate toleration of a hobby.

"The science of palmistry," continued Paolo Bernard, who was not smoking, "will one day," says Alexandre Dumas the younger, "be the grammar of the human race."

"Am I to understand, then,"—with as perfect and good-humoured a courtesy as if he were not asking the question for the hundredth time,—"that it is possible, by means of this science, to conjugate a man, so to speak, to account for his moods, especially for that great infinitive 'to be,' and to solve, for the first time in the history of mankind, the vast problem 'Know thyself'?'

"That is so."

"And a man versed in the science may become possessed at will of his friends' secrets and the designs of his enemies?"

"There is no limit to its possible usefulness. Think of the purposes it may serve in the detection of crime!"

"And the mistakes that may be made——"

"You do not understand. We do not see the matter from the same standpoint. No mistake is possible to the skilled cheiromant——"

"I did not know that you laid claim to infallibility!"

"——to the skilled cheiromant who comprehends that events are at the sole disposal of the Supreme Being who is at once the centre and Ruler of all destiny."

"Or, to quote what you have so often quoted to me, 'The stars govern us, but God governs the stars.'"

"Precisely. You improve."

"I must be your despair."

"I never said so. The palmist is born, not made. You, who look upon cheiromancy as a lingering remnant of the gross superstition of the dark ages, will always have a larger following than I, who believe it to be a science in the highest sense of the word, teaching as it does that supreme knowledge of self which is the goal of every student of humanity."

"But, according to you, the inner life of each and all of us is at the mercy of any schoolgirl who chooses to take up the popular craze, and, after a perfunctory glance at the pages of some cheirosophical manual, considers herself qualified to deal ou'

death and marriage, disaster and success, cheerfully and indiscriminately to all her relatives and friends?"

Paolo Bernard smiled.

"We have nothing to fear from the harmless vagaries of the young person. A science that has outlived the follies of necromancy and divination may well survive the charlatanries of nineteenth-century amateurs."

"You believe that it will go out of fashion?"

"Guy Barron! Now you disimprove! Go out of fashion! Are geography, history, mathematics and music likely to go out of fashion, think you? Why, when these silly dabblers have transferred their pitiable superfluous energy to some new craze, the art they tried to desecrate will be securely elevated to its proper place in the ranks of the exact sciences."

"So you have prophesied a thousand times. But I am still incredulous."

"I know. But why? You believe in physiognomy and phrenology why not in this? If a man's propensities and characteristics are written on his face and head, may they not also be inscribed on that far more delicate surface of the hand, where the busy brain delights to jot down its impressions?'

"But is this possible?"

"Hear me out. Not the passing events of the hour alone are chronicled here. Every inherited tendency, every hereditary taint, every secret vice, finds expression on the sensitive palm. The root of the disease that baffles the physician, the solution of the mystery that darkens a home, the unsuspected germ of evil that is to widen out into centuries of misery, the first faint beginnings of a sin that is to leave its impress on generations, the earliest link of a chain that is to bind the cradle to the grave, are all faithfully portrayed on that impressionable page."

"Why, this is more dangerous than hypnotism!"

"With this exception—the hypnotic subject *may* deceive the operator, the hand *never* deceives."

"*Gant ôté, la femme est nue!*"

"*L'homme aussi.* There is no masquerading here. Show me the hand, and I will show you the man."

"Paolo, have you never thought of turning your talent to account?"

Guy Barron, lazier than an American should have been, leaned back in his friend's luxurious arm-chair, and glanced round the apartment, that answered his question in the negative; money-making was not a necessity with its master.

Paolo Bernard's rooms in Audley Street were simply furnished. It was only those who came from less pretentious homes who detected the luxury underlying the apparent simplicity. The carpet was plain in design, but the feet sank delightfully into it. The pictures were few and small, only connoisseurs were aware of their value. The chairs were carved oak, each with a history. Priceless enamels, costly statuettes, dainty miniatures were scattered up and down the brackets and cabinets. The tapestry hangings were guileless of the odour of smoke and brandy that lurks in the ordinary bachelor den. The silken curtains fell in folds as graceful as if a woman's hand had draped them.

And yet there was nothing effeminate about this Paolo Bernard, although much of his strength was merely to be guessed at, as most of his intellect was only hinted at. A tall, spare man, with the poet's eye and the scholar's brow, dreamy and contemplative in manner, after the fashion of a keen observer of men and things. For the rest, he was an Englishman, the son of an Italian mother, and master of a considerable fortune. He was known to have dabbled in spiritualism, and to be an ardent disciple of the Nancy school of hypnotism.

"No, I have never turned my talent to account, as you, mercenary man of the world, call it. But, who knows? I may yet inaugurate a new departure in detective science."

"In which case, I have no doubt, you will surpass Sherlock Holmes himself."

Paolo Bernard crossed the room, and unlocked a corner cabinet. With his hand on the door he went on speaking, his face turned towards Guy Barron.

"I have never shown you my murderer's hand. Don't start. I should have said the cast of a murderer's hand. A perfect specimen of its kind. Will you see it?"

"How did it come into your possession?"

"Have no fear. You have not stumbled on a crime. Seven or eight years ago, while staying in Paris, I made the acquaintance of a young doctor on the staff of one of the large hospitals. We had many tastes in common,—amongst others, cheiromancy. One day a man, a countryman of yours, I believe, by the way, was brought to my friend's hospital, suffering from some disease of the fingers, which necessitated the removal of the hand. It was given to me. Here is the cast."

The hand of a murderer

There was nothing gruesome in the counterfeit presentment which Paolo Bernard held out to his friend. It was a perfectly moulded model of a small, broad hand, with stumpy fingers. Guy Barron took it somewhat nervously.

"But what reason have you for saying that this is a murderer's hand? Have you proved the truth of your assertion?

"The original owner of that hand, my dear Barron, is as much a stranger to me as to you. And yet, I have not the slightest hesitation in pronouncing him to be, as I said before, a murderer, and that of the most dangerous type. Not a single indication is absent. The line of head deeply traced and thick, with a circle on it, joined to the line of heart and separate from the line of life; the high mount and plain of Mars; the sister line at the base of the life line; the twisted second finger and the clubbed thumb, are all here."

"And, on the strength of these, you brand a man, of whom you know absolutely nothing, murderer."

'I, no less than every faithful cheiromant, recognise the necessity for withholding a final pronouncement until I have seen *both* hands. It cannot be too strongly impressed on the student of palmistry that a sign, to be infallible, *must* exist in both hands. So I give my unknown subject the benefit of the doubt. Until I have seen its fellow, I shall not give a final opinion on my cast. But this I still maintain: it is the hand of a devil. I have no doubt, however, that the face of the man who once laid claim to it is the face of an angel. When I meet him——'

"Then you hope——"

"Knowing me for what I am, you will not be surprised at what I am about to say to you. I would give—what would I not give?—to find this man, to read in his other hand the story which this" (touching the cast) "only permits me to guess at. Nor is it mere vulgar curiosity that prompts me. It is borne in upon me, by what means I know not, that the tragedy written in this palm is to be my concern—that I am destined, no matter how or where, to read its sequel."

Guy Barron was used to outbreaks of this kind; but something in the speaker's tone, or in his earnest, far-seeing eyes, made the American unusually serious.

"My dear Paolo! Let us hope your presentiment is ill-founded, born of prolonged study of this bit of plaster. If the owner of the original be what you imagine, may he never cross your path!"

"And yet, just now, you were anxious for me to break a lance with Sherlock Holmes! By the way, we are due at the Opera to-night. Have you forgotten? Where do we dine?"

"At the Albemarle."

"*En route*, then,"—turning the key in the lock of the cabinet, and so shutting the hand of the unknown into darkness and oblivion.

It was the nearest approach to a gala night that is ever known at a London opera. Some junior members of the reigning House occupied the Royal box. There was a sprinkling of celebrities in the stalls. Diamonds glittered from the dark background of the velvet furnishings.

The greatest singer of her century was the attraction. She had known poverty and failure, and had stared shame and death in the face in her time, but now she was famous,—the world had gone mad over her.

Two men, standing in the vestibule, watched the crowd passing, more or less leisurely, to their places. In a lull of the stream three figures crossed the marble floor—an elderly woman, a young girl, and a man of four- or five-and-thirty. Paolo Bernard touched the American on the shoulder.

"Frau von Ilmenau, Emma, and the Polish Count."

"What made you think of such a thing?" asked the other, who knew his "Hyperion."

"The girl's face. Watch it."

"Do you know who she is?"

"No."

"Mabel Venour. Beauty and heiress. Should you care to make her acquaintance?"

"Not particularly. Come, let us go in."

At that moment the girl's eyes, that had been straying furtively around her, fastened themselves on Paolo's face. There was no mistaking their language. It was a passionate appeal for help. The unhappy soul looking out of those miserable eyes called him to some work for her. What it might be remained to be seen. One

thing was clear: she had beckoned him to her. He was her knight-errant from that moment. Paolo Bernard's solitary soul, that had gone on its way lonely and unmoved by any woman's beauty, leapt forward purified and selfless in an instant, to do the bidding of its sister soul.

The three figures swept past him. He saw that the girl might have sat for the portrait of Emma of Ilmenau.

"Her figure was slight; her countenance beautiful, though deadly white; and her meek eyes, like the flower of the nightshade, pale and blue, but sending forth golden rays."

"Who is the man?"—for he had bowed in passing to Guy Barron.

"Earle Rothes. He is said to be engaged to Miss Venour."

"Impossible!"

"My dear Paolo! I thought your rule was never to judge a man whose hand you had not seen."

"Who said I had judged? Mr. Rothes seems the original of the Polish Count. What higher praise can I bestow?"

He went on to quote Longfellow: "a young Antinous, with a moustache and a nose *à la Kosciusko*. In other respects, a perfect hero of romance."

"And the elder lady?"—watching the three figures disappear into their box.

"The girl's eyes fastened themselves on Paolo's face."

"Princess Alessandro, Miss Venour's aunt, or cousin, or chaperone, or either. We shall lose the first act, Paolo."

Guy Barron, going down Bond Street two or three days later, stumbled upon Earle Rothes. Their previous acquaintance had been merely a bowing one, but "the Polish Count," as the American had learnt to call him, was cordiality itself.

"I was on my way to Lacon & Ollier's to find a palmist, for a lady who has gone mad on the popular craze."

"Stop: I think I can help you."

"What? Are you hitten, too?"

"No: a friend of mine. Paolo Bernard——"

"I have heard of him. Has rather a reputation at this sort of thing, hasn't he? Well, will you bring him? I will tell the Princess to send you a card."

"The Princess?"

"Yes. Princess Alessandro. She is perfectly insane on palmistry."

"I cannot promise that my friend will cure her."

"Till Thursday, then, *au revoir*!"

"Are you willing to earn an honest penny?" Guy Barron asked his friend. "If

so, what are your terms? In other words, at how much per hand do you delineate? That is the correct phrase, is it not?"

"Where is it?"

"Of all places in the world, Princess Alessandro's. Her Thursdays are not bad. You will come?"

This was a summons. *She* had need of him. He would go.

"Yes, I will come. To whom am I indebted for the honour of the invitation, or command?"

"To the Polish Count."

"Ah! To Mr. Rothes."

"By interpretation. What a study that man's hand should be!"

"How so?"

"He has lived his life."

"What do you know of him?"

"All, and nothing. He inherited a large fortune from his uncle, John Whitstable of Connecticut, the man who was murdered some years ago, you remember, by armed burglars in his own house. Then the nephew came to Europe, where his reputation is that of an all-conquering hero. He is equally at home in Paris as in London, in Vienna as in Rome. Women rave about him."

"Miss Venour amongst the number?"

"She has outlived the raving stage. Poor girl! You know her story?"

"No."

"Not that she was engaged to young Despard of Elston,—he was murdered, you remember,—and that the marriage was to have taken place almost immediately?"

"Mr. Rothes evidently has extraordinary luck. It is astonishing how kind Fate is to some people! No less than two persons does she remove out of her favourite's path simply that he may become a rich man and the husband of a beautiful wife."

"Oh! as for *that*, it is a mere *on dit*. Ignore it at the Princess's."

The Princess Alessandro was at home in her salon, a somewhat pinchbeck apartment in her house in Clarges Street. Mabel Venour was its mistress in name, but not in reality, although her money paid the rent. There had been a past in this girl's life when it would have been easy for her to assert herself. But that had been before the awful day when she was called from the final discussion of the never-to-be-worn bridal gown to her lover's dying bed. Happiness, enthusiasm, strength, will, had all left her then. Life was a mere drifting now. It was only of late that she had realised, with the woman's quick instinct not yet wholly deadened in her, into what maelstroms she might be hurried ere she was aware of her danger. Vague at first, this sense of peril deepened with every added courtesy, every new attention forced on her by Earle Rothes; and she was utterly helpless. At least, she had been utterly helpless until the moment when a stranger's face, seen across the crowded vestibule of the Opera-house, had flashed in its strength and beauty upon her sight. It scarcely surprised her to meet him again in the drawing-room at Clarges Street. She had need of him. He had come. Guy Barron introduced him to her; but she seemed to have known him a long time before. There was an old-fashioned courtesy in his manner that pleased her. She had, indeed, expected it. It was in perfect accord with his stately walk, the poise of his dark head, the dark, earnest eyes, and dreamy smile. She had not exchanged half a dozen words with him when the Princess carried him off to "operate," as she insisted on calling it. His corner was, henceforth, the centre of attraction. Music was going on in an inner room, but nobody listened. Paolo Bernard was the hero of the afternoon. As the women

passed, one by one, from the magician's presence, they were not long in bidding their hostess adieu: such strange things as they had heard were best discussed with bated breath in the shelter of their own rooms.

"Tell me, Lady Marion, is there any truth in it?"

"Truth? My dear Princess, the man is a wizard!"

"What witchcraft is driving Lady Marion away?"

"Go and see for yourself, Mr. Rothes," giving him her hand in passing.

"If you wish to be read like a book,—yes."

"What? you serious, too, Duchess? Come, I must try my luck. Where is the magician?"

The crowd had thinned considerably. Paolo Bernard was leaning back in a restful attitude in his chair, Guy Barron standing beside him talking to Miss Venour.

"I have brought you another subject, Mr. Bernard," said the Princess.

Earle Rothes affected to shudder. "Can we not think of a better name? It is too suggestive of the knife."

"From all I have heard, Mr. Bernard's delineations are equal to a surgical operation."

"Well, I am willing to risk it. Come, sir, here is my hand. Delineate, operate, what you like."

"'Come, sir, here is my hand.'"

Paolo Bernard took it in silence, and held it so. The eyes of one woman, interested she scarcely knew why in this meeting, detected something of horror, or disgust, or both, in the perceptible pause. She, no less than the other unskilled ones, looking over the palmist's shoulder, saw that there was something incongruous, almost grotesque, in the hand that belonged to Earle Rothes' body. Was it merely so as contrasted with the other hand in which it lay? Red, because Paolo Bernard's was white. Coarse, because his was refined? Sensual, because his was psychic? Did the cheiromant's long tapering fingers and rosy polished nails throw into sinister relief the short fingers and livid nails of the other? Was it merely because the one was a poet's hand that the other was the hand of a——

"Pardon me, Mr. Bernard, but does the effort of delineation always have the same effect upon you?"

"What is that?"

No one, not even Earle Rothes, who had asked the first question, seemed to notice that Mabel Venour had answered it with another. The subject whose hand was under examination went on addressing himself to Paolo.

"Your hand has turned to ice."

"It is simply caused by holding it so long in one position. May I see your other hand?"

"I am sorry to say I cannot oblige you. Circumstances over which I had no control deprived me of my left hand many years ago."

"Then I regret that I can tell you nothing," rejoined the cheiromant, almost brusquely; but once more Mabel Venour's eyes, following his, saw that they were fastened, full of horror and doubt, on the gloved semblance of Earle Rothes' lost hand.

"I told those French scoundrels that they were doing me an unnecessary injury, and I have lived to prove it true in more senses than one. Here am I positively debarred from the supreme satisfaction of knowing myself as others do *not* know me simply on account of the Parisian faculty's love of the knife."

"It was in Paris, then——?"

"In Paris. At the Hospital St. Alain. But come, sir, is your 'nothing' final?'

"My rule is never to pronounce judgment on one hand only. An indication, to be certain, must appear in both hands."

"But surely you can tell me something from this hand. If your art is what you assert it to be, you can decipher at least half of my destiny."

"As you will. Only, do me the justice to remember that I am working in the dark—that your other hand might have contradicted or corroborated every sign in this."

"Proceed."

"You are fond of admiration, ease and luxury. You are somewhat inclined to exaggerate. You have plenty of self-confidence and will. You have been singularly fortunate."

"Shall I continue so?"

"Why not? Men of your indomitable will can always command success."

"I believe it. Nothing has ever stood between me and my desires. To wish has been to have. And now for events, Sir Wizard."

"I cannot speak with any certainty. Your life has been eventful. Two—nay, three obstacles have stood in your path, and have been removed by the same hand. The removal of the first gave you wealth; of the second, freedom; of the third——"

"Well, of the third?"

"I can tell you no more."

"Now, Mr. Rothes, what do you think of it?"

"My dear Princess, Mr Bernard is indeed a wizard But I am sure he will believe that I am not in any way discrediting his powers when I say that palmistry still remains for me a frivolous amusement, a distraction for enthusiasts, or for madmen whose love of the marvellous has become a greed."

"But Lady Marion and the Duchess——"

"Are sensitive, credulous women."

"The cheiromant thrusts his science on no one, Mr. Rothes. But of this be sure: the hand *never* lies. We—the majority of us at any rate—in the course of years teach our eyes and our lips to keep silence and to guard our secrets, but we do not reckon with that summer-up of character and destiny which we call the hand, the most perfectly constructed member of the body, and therefore the most fitted to express human faculties and predilections."

The man to whom Paolo Bernard spoke had learnt how to compel those untrustworthy vassals, lips and eyes, to discretion; but he had certainly never taken account of his hand And the cheiromant annoyed him. He did not embarrass with the coolly impertinent stare of the physiognomist, nor with the prying fingers of the phrenologist; but his calm confidence in himself and in his science nettled the man of the world. On the other hand, the covert insolence of Earle Rothes' tone and manner, his blatant self-assertion, added every moment to the strong antagonism with which Paolo Bernard had from the first regarded him. Indeed, it was evident to the least observant of the little group about them that between the two men there was undeclared, but no less genuine, hostility.

Earle Rothes moved away, smiling sneeringly, and whispering into the Princess's ear, "A tissue of nonsense from beginning to end! The man is, vulgarly speaking, a humbug! He has told me nothing which I did not know already, and by chance he has made a few lucky hits, after the fashion of these prophets of evil."

"But the Duchess said——"

"I am not the Duchess, my dear Princess"

Mabel Venour watched them out of hearing before she put the question that had been burning in her brain:

"Was that a true delineation?"

There seemed to be more than ordinary anxiety in her tone and in her very attitude.

Paolo Bernard turned his head, and looked at her long and steadily She stood beside him, tall, even in contrast with his great height, steadying herself, or at least it seemed so, against a high-backed chair She was even paler than when he had first seen her, but a pink spot burned on either cheek. But for this and her eager eyes, she might have been a statue. Her white tea-gown, with its trailing folds and winged sleeves, added to the illusion.

"Why do you doubt me?"

"Because I understand a little about palmistry, and I have looked at Mr Rothes' hand, and——"

"Your impression does not coincide with mine?"

"No."

"And if I told you I had lied, what then?"

"I should say it was for reasons of your own."

"And do me the justice to ask no more?"

"Certainly."

Her delicate hand fluttered into his, outstretched To all the world, Paolo Bernard was taking leave of his hostess to them, it was the seal and token of trust on one side, of defence on the other.

Guy Barron preserved a discreet silence until the two men had gained Piccadilly

"Paolo, what was the name of your friend's hospital?"

For all answer, the other gripped his arm as if in a vice

"It is too early to ask questions But will you help me?"

"To the death But he is a dangerous fellow And how in the world are you going to bring it home to him? I never heard of palmistry being admitted as evidence in the law courts."

"You have said that I may count on your help. Then I ask for silence. You imagine too much."

In June—three months later—Paolo Bernard gave a supper in his rooms. The guests numbered four. Princess Alessandro, Miss Venour, Guy Barron, and Earle Rothes. The presence of the latter gentleman was not accounted for by the skirmishes that had invariably marked his frequent meetings with his host in Clarges Street. But it was an understood thing in London society that where Miss Venour and her chaperone went there Mr Rothes went also, and it suited Paolo Bernard's purpose to invite him just as much as it suited his purpose to accept the invitation. The little function was perfect of its kind; but, in spite of the host's carefully adjusted attentions and his guests' responsive gaiety, there was a shadow on the feast, more felt than seen. Perhaps the number was an awkward one, suggestive to each of the five that he or she might be spoiling a *partie carrée*. Or the shadow might have originated in the ill-disguised scowl on Earle Rothes' low brows. Or it might have been born of Mabel Venour's white face and *distraite* manner. She had come on from a party at the French Embassy, which afforded a pretext for her weariness. She wore pink, made in her favourite Greek fashion, her golden hair bound with a fillet. The place of honour at her host's right hand had been assigned to her, and he was full of quiet, unobtrusive attentions. But she seemed to have no interest in anything, save, perhaps, in the flowers with which the table was laden They were, indeed, everywhere overflowing the tall vases like rainbow foam in a cup of wine, and weighing down the carved brackets like a harvest tribute from summer fields. Ropes of them swung from sconce to sconce, and shimmered changefully as the lamps flung, here a golden, there a crimson glow, their light falling through a yellow or a scarlet shade.

The Princess alone seemed bent on enjoying herself thoroughly. But then, she was, as Guy Barron said, "so intensely materialistic!" Like all women of her type, she affected intense spirituality. Her appearance, however, was pathetically against her. Young people whose ears were tickled by the sound of the Princess Alessandro's romantic name collapsed into disappointment when they saw her She was fat and English—absurdly so. When she walked, she intended to convey the impression of sailing—rude people called it waddling She made a pilgrimage about Paolo's rooms, levelling her *pince-nez* at the statues and scrutinising the pictures. She stopped at last before the cabinet, confessing to a perfect passion for those "sweet bits" of furniture.

'My Bluebeard's cupboard, Princess," was the answer to her look of inquiry.

'Mabel, my dear child! Do you hear? We must persuade Mr Bernard to unlock his cabinet of mystery. I do so dote on mystery!"

"The contents of my cabinet are not worthy of so high-sounding a name, as Mr Barron can tell you"

'You have seen them?" gasped the Princess

"I have."

"Love-letters, perhaps?" sneered Earle Rothes

"No," was the sharp response. Paolo Bernard's hand already on the door of the cabinet. Something in his guest's tone seemed to determine him to action, for he turned the key quickly in the lock.

"My Bluebeard's cupboard, Princess, contains but one treasure: the cast of a hand."

"The cast of a hand! I positively can't wait another moment. Open sesame!"

The door of the cabinet seemed to obey the magic command, it opened so swiftly and so noiselessly. Paolo Bernard brought his treasure to the light.

"Is that all? It is nothing much to look at."

"Ah! Princess, is not that the old story—the old sequence of events attendant on the opening of all our Bluebeard's cupboards, the lifting of every veil? Curiosity, impatience, gratification, disillusion, disappointment!"

"Whose hand is it? Where did you get it? It's not very aristocratic-looking."

"That depends upon what you mean by aristocratic."

"Oh! delicate, refined, with long, taper fingers."

"Psychic, in short. And you believe such a hand to be an infallible sign of blue blood, of a long line of noble ancestors? You never made a greater mistake. If heredity goes for anything, the descendants of those old warriors with whom modern aristocracy loves to claim kinship were nearly always of the spatulate type."

"Is not this a digression, Mr. Bernard? The stage waits."

The interruption came from Earle Rothes. He had risen from his seat, and stood leaning against Mabel Venour's chair with an arrogant assumption of familiarity. Guy Barron, an onlooker at a scene that might at any moment blaze into a tragedy, noted that Paolo Bernard saw and appreciated the action at its full significance. But to the rest he seemed unseeing. He fingered the cast lazily, addressing himself directly to the Princess:

"Must I answer your questions categorically? Whose hand is it? As far as I know, a murderer's."

Spoken in the ears of an ordinary assemblage, this word would have made no more impression than the mention of any of the usual forms of death. But on two of this little group needs must that its effect was extraordinary. The red hand of a murderer had touched them very closely. It could have been nothing but the memories evoked by this hideous name that sent the blood ebbing from the livid face of John Whitstable's nephew and heir. The associations of a tragically interrupted betrothal took the shape of tears in Mabel Venour's sad eyes. And yet, she forgave the hand that wounded. Not so Earle Rothes.

"Must I remind you that this is in bad taste, considering——"

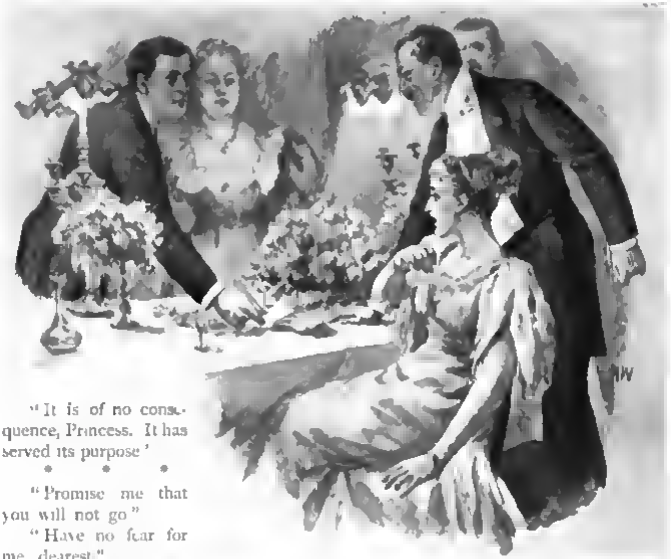
"That two of my hearers have had closer acquaintance with that ugly name than the rest of us? I am not forgetting. Nay, I am bound to remember when I look at this embodiment of every evil passion by which a man can be swayed. It is the hand of a monster! Such a man would not be content with a single crime. His thirst for blood would probably be surpassed only by his ingenuity in devising murder! His talent for crime would be superb! It is the hand of a Borgia!"

"Sir, this is intolerable!"

Earle Rothes almost staggered forward, bringing his hand down on the table with angry emphasis. At the same moment Paolo Bernard placed the cast on the white cloth. The living hand and the counterfeit presentment lay side by side. The cheiromant's dark eyes seemed to burn into them.

"Such a hand," resumed the palmist, his voice a merciless monotone, "might well have stabbed your uncle, Mr. Rothes. Or have felled your lover to the ground, Miss Venour. I can even fancy these fingers strangling the life out of——"

There was a smothered cry, a rush forward, a crash. Miss Venour had fainted, and, in the alarm of the moment, the cast had been swept from the table. It lay on the floor, broken into a dozen pieces. Paolo Bernard swept them aside with his foot.



"The living hand and the counterfeit lay side by side."

"It is of no consequence, Princess. It has served its purpose'

* * *

"Promise me that you will not go"

"Have no fear for me, dearest"

"But I am afraid. I must be afraid. It will be with you as it was with Lionel. It seems to me——"

"Yes, it seems to you?—Well, my love?"

"——that his death was my fault! That *I* was its innocent cause! His love for me was his death. He was killed because he dared to love me. And now—now—that another loves me, whom I love,"—pausing and laying her hand in her lover's,—"I am afraid"

"My dear love,'—stroking the sunny hair, his voice itself a caress,—"what can harm me while I have your prayers?"

"But you will be at the mercy of a murderer, and you know him to be a murderer."

"Hush! hush! This is our secret."

"And his. He guesses that we suspect"

"If my worst enemy were sick unto death in a strange land, I should go to him."

"I know, I know. Tell me the story. Where is it?"

"An Italian, speaking no language but his own, is dying in a poor lodging house in Lisson Grove, with no friend but Earle Rothes"

"God help him''

"At least, it is a friendly thought that prompts him to send for me, who can speak to him in his own tongue'

"You will not go alone? You will take Mr. Barron with you?"

"Guy is at Brighton"

"Then you are going to your death"

Mabel Venour's warning words rang unpleasantly in Paolo Pernard's ears as he went along the crowded streets to his tryst with what?—Death had an ugly sound in the summer evening, pink-flushed and stilly. And then he was in London, where—— Stay—what was it some one had said in Clarges Street only last night? "For tragedies, give me London! No sooner does the grave close over one than another rises up in its place." And then, Mabel had said, "You are going to your death!" What connection was there between these things? He distrusted the man at whose bidding he was taking this journey, but the end might not necessarily be that ugly name which had a knack of wiping the pink out of the sky and seemed to set the air on fire. In his chequered life Paolo Bernard had rubbed shoulders more than once with death, and that unconcernedly. But he was not quite so ready to bid it welcome now. Life had seemed sweeter to him since Mabel Venour's dear eyes had looked in upon his solitary soul. No, death was irreconcilable with this new and fuller life. And yet she had said, "You are going to your death."

The house was a poor one in Church Street,—the lower part a shop. A hideous old man opened the door. Paolo mentioned Mr. Rothes' name, and was ushered up the dark, creaking stairs, into a dirty, low-ceilinged room. Earle Rothes was its sole occupant.

"Where is the Italian?" asked Paolo, with a sharp glance around him.

"Briefly,—nowhere. Did it never occur to you that my letter might have been a ruse? I wanted to get you into my power,—and here you are."

"You intend to murder me, as you murdered——"

"——my uncle, because I was tired of waiting for dead men's shoes, as I murdered Lionel Despard, because he stood between me and the woman whose money I wanted."

"And when you have murdered me?"

"I mean to marry her."

"And murder her?"

"When she has made her will in my favour."

Would it be murder—could any righteous judge count it murder—to rid the world of this monster?—to save Mabel Venour from the hideous fate awaiting her? One or other only would leave this room alive. Which? If he, Paolo, allowed himself to be murdered, he would be faithless to his trust, false to his vow of knight-errantry. For her sake, and not for any use that his helpless life had been or might be, he must live. At least, he would not die without a fight for life. The key clicked in the lock. He was alone with this man,—trapped! A life was nothing to this murderer,—merely a pebble to be kicked out of his way. And yet, the red glare of murder in his eyes, the ferocious panting of a wild beast for blood, had no power to daunt Paolo Bernard.

"Upon my soul, if I were not so desperately hard up, I should give you your life. Your pluck is superb. Man, do you know that I mean to *kill* you?"

"Not if I can kill *you*."

It was a battle-signal—the call to arms. Oh God! what a battle! Against what fearful odds! But it was a fight for Mabel,—Mabel's happiness and honour, perhaps her life, were at stake. Always before Paolo Bernard's blazing eyes, stirring his ebbing pulses, giving back his failing strength, was one picture—the white vision of the woman he loved. Only a miracle could spare him to her, and in this supreme moment his old beliefs seemed to forsake him. If the spirits were indeed what he had believed them to be, guardian and champion, surely, surely, they would help him now! The world had never known him for a religious

man, but, even in this mad struggle for life, his every thought was a prayer. Forgotten words that his Catholic mother had whispered in his childhood came back to him, while his assailant's hand was crushing into his throat the little gold cross that she had hung about his neck. This was death: this the end of his fool's errand. He had read of this mystic passage under many imageries—the river, the icy hand, the ebbing tide: he was proving them all. Here and there,—hither and thither,—the swaying of the two bodies keeping time to the wind and rain howling and pelting against the window-pane. For a great storm had broken over London,—a memorable storm,—a storm of which men still speak,—a storm in which Nature abandoned herself to a blind fury of fierce thunder-peals and blue lightnings and hoarse gusts of wind. Was there help, or encouragement, or defence in the warring elements? They came too late.

Paolo Bernard's strength was failing fast.

What noise was that? Thunder? Or an earthquake? Or the roar of a river? Or——

Flashing between them like a sword, the lightning tore the two men asunder, felling them to the ground. One man awoke in the grey dawn that followed that fearful night. Beside him lay a ghastly upturned face. Paolo touched the clenched hand. It was cold in death.

E. M. Hewitt.

"Beside him lay a ghastly upturned face."

Footprints of the Devil IN OUR OWN Country.

WHEN one religion has given place to another, the old divinities are apt to be treated in two very different ways by those who have come to reject their authority. On the one hand the conservative instinct of mankind in general tends to preserve time-honoured rites and ceremonies, and is loth to cast away ingrained prejudices and superstitions. Relics of a more or less discarded creed may attach themselves to new objects of worship, or customary observances may continue to be paid to familiar tutelary powers, no longer indeed looked upon as supreme, but still respected or dreaded as beings whom it is desirable to propitiate. Many of the teachers of the new faith and their most zealous disciples will, on the other hand, be opposed to all attempts at compromise. In their anxious desire to remove every particle of the old leaven, they will not be content with dethroning the ancient deities, but must needs represent them as deserving hatred or contempt. Thus the *Devas* are bright and beneficent gods in the Sanskrit Vedas, but dark and wicked spirits in the Persian Zend Avesta. The dragon or serpent in more than one primeval cult is the symbol of creative and recuperative power, of wisdom, and sometimes of immortality. To Jews and Christians it became the type of all evil, and is identified in the last book of the Bible with the arch-enemy of man.* The early Christians held that the idols of Greece and Rome were devils in disguise; and our own Milton, it will be remembered, has dramatically illustrated this view of polytheism in "Paradise Lost."† The very word which means a divine being in classical Greek was degraded by Jewish and Christian usage into a "demon" in the modern sense.

So when Christianity came into successful conflict with Keltic and Teutonic mythology, similar results followed, traces of which have been left in popular phrases and folk-lore. Thus the familiar appellation of "Old Nick" has probably no connection with the name Nicholas, as commonly supposed, but is an abbreviated form of "Nicor," a Saxon water-sprite, containing the same etymological root as "nixie." Like Baal-zebub,‡ and other gods of a foreign or discredited Pantheon, "Old Nick" has become one and the same with the prince of the devils, and his originally aquatic province has been exchanged for a realm of fire and brimstone

* Rev. xii. 9. On its first appearance in the Hebrew Scriptures the serpent is endowed with exceptional wisdom, though it is represented as exercised for a malicious purpose. The beneficent aspect of this symbol as the source of life and health is shown in the story of the brazen serpent in the wilderness.

† Book I., ll. 356–521.

‡ Cf. 2 Kings i. 2 with St. Matt. xii. 24.

But under the *alias* of "Davy Jones," whose "locker" is at the bottom of the sea, and "Old Harry,"* who has an evil reputation among mariners as the brewer of storms, his association with the watery element is still retained. On one part of the English coast, the dashing and crashing of huge boulders by a stormy surf is spoken of as Old Nick playing at marbles† In like manner the shaggy woodland spirit *Skrat* or *Skratti* of Scandinavian mythology, still survives among us as "Old Scratch"

Another instance of the migration of what was formerly held sacred into the region of the infernal is furnished by the evil reputation of Walpurgis Night, when witches, mounted on goats and broomsticks, were believed to hold high revel with their master, Satan, on desolate heaths and hills. This was once the most solemn festival of Keltic paganism—the night between the last day of April and the first of May. The favourite haunts of witches on their "Sabbaths" were the old places of heathen sacrifice.

The Devil's Island, Killarney.

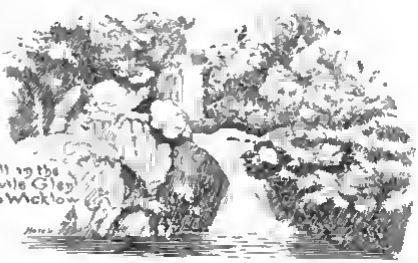
The grotesque features of the vulgar devil are descended partly from rustic gods akin to the classical Pan and Faunus, and partly from Loki, the northern Vulcan, whose limping and uncouth gait excited the laughter of the other deities. The Gael of the Scottish Highlands believes, or used to believe, in "a goblin called Ourisk, whose form is like that of Pan"; and "from this sylvan deity," writes Scott, in his "Letters on Demonology," "the modern nations of Europe have borrowed the degrading and unsuitable emblems of the goat's visage and form, the horns, hoofs and tail with which they have depicted the author of evil when it pleased him to show himself upon earth. It is related of one of these goblins, which frequented a mill near the foot of Loch Lomond, . . ." continues Sir Walter, and proceeds to relate a part of the legend which may be found in full in an article on "Irish Fairy Tales" contributed by W. S. Rose to the *Quarterly Review*, June 1825. A Highland miller was much vexed by his mill being set at work nightly when there was nothing to grind, to the serious damage of the machinery. One of his men volunteered to sit up to watch for the delinquent; but, having made himself a good turf fire, at last fell asleep. He awoke in the middle of the night, and found a sort of lubber fiend seated opposite to him, hairy, like him of "L'Allegro," and boldly demanded his name. The demon said he was called Urisk (Gaelic for a goblin), and in return asked the name of his interrogator, who answered, "Myself." The fiend being satisfied as to this particular, fell asleep in his turn, when the watcher tossed a panful of hot ashes into his hairy lap, and the goblin was instantly in flames. He ran, screaming with agony, to the door, and was answered by the yells of a host of mountain spirits. "What has befallen thee?" exclaimed his brother goblins. "He has set me on fire." "Who?"

* An isolated chalk cliff near Swanage, in Dorsetshire, is commonly called "Old Harry"

† "Silhouettes" in the *Idler*, Feb 1892

demanded the fiends. "Myself," cried Urisk. "Then you may put it out yourself," replied the spirits. Scott, in noticing the resemblance between this story and that of *Outis* ("Nobody") in the "Odyssey," observes, "Perhaps some Churchman, more learned than his brethren, may have transferred the legend from Sicily to Dunrnine, from the shores of the Mediterranean to those of Loch Lomond." But there is an Esthonian tale of the devil's death which resembles yet more closely the myth of Ulysses and Polyphemus. In this variant the devil is blinded by a man who engaged to furnish him with a pair of new eyes. The man had told him that his name was Issi (Self), so that when the devil rushes out and tells all whom he meets that Issi has done it, he is only laughed at as a fool, and dies of his wounds. There is also a story current in India the point of which turns upon a similar trick.

A diabolical miller appears in a German legend which may be compared with the foregoing. Zoit's mill, near Liebschwitz, was haunted at night by the devil, who was in the habit of using one of the stones to grind down his hoofs. On one occasion a young fellow employed at the mill lay in wait for the fiend, and spied him at his work; but paid dearly for his pains, for the devil seized him and held his hinder parts to the grindstone till he had lost at least half of them. Another of the miller's men, however, who was older and wiser, came upon the intruder unawares, and this time it was the devil himself whose posteriors suffered curtailment; while, later on, a clever lad tied him up in a sack in spite of all his struggles, and threw him into the mill-pond, which put an end to his pranks.



"The best-known marks of the devil," says Ennemoser, in his "History of Magic," "are the cloven foot, the goat's beard, the cock's feather, and the ox's tail." The cloven hoof is sometimes replaced by that of a horse (especially in German art), or by a goose's foot. The red beard which often distinguished him is derived from Donar or Thor, the god of thunder; and his green, grey, or red cloak attests his close connection with the fairies, kobolds and dwarfs. The jocular humour which marks even the most malicious tricks of those little people, according to the old Northern mythology, is reproduced in the demons of mediæval miracle plays, when the entrance of Diabolus and his imps was always hailed with much the same sort of hilarity as that which is provoked among our children by the harlequinade of a modern pantomime. It is not so very long ago since the *Passionsspiel* at Ober Ammergau was disfigured by vulgar ribaldry of this sort, the fate of Judas Iscariot, as described in the Acts of the Apostles (i. 18), being dramatically presented with the help of a long string of sausages, upon which a troop of hungry demons used to pounce with delight. It has been said of Southey that he could never think of the devil without laughing; and some of the most ludicrous verses ever made on "Old Nick" are the overflowings of his quill. This (as Sir George Cox has pertinently remarked in his "Aryan Mythology") is a proof of his genuine Teutonic descent. The monstrous stature and gross stupidity of the devil of Norse and German folklore are derived, it may be, from the awkward trolls and giants, whose vast size and strength are no match for the wit of the heroes who defeat their wickedness. Even Mephistopheles, who in Goethe's hands is the very essence of worldly wisdom and

cynical penetration, was popularly presented as a heavy lout, a regular *dummerteufel*, in spite of his having the laugh on his own side in the end, when Faust is carried bodily away in his clutches.

There are other old Teutonic folk tales, however, in which the devil is exhibited as a decidedly clever personage. In one of these he combines astuteness with a certain good-natured generosity still more rare in the vulgar conception of his character. A native of Eisenberg, named Bastian, who had run away from his mother's humble roof, after meeting with a number of strange adventures, fell into great distress in China. Thence he was enabled to return home by means of a compact with the devil, that he should either forfeit his soul's salvation, or live for three years without once washing himself, or combing his hair, or changing his clothes, or saying his prayers, or going to church. For more than two years he fulfilled these conditions, taking up his abode in a pig-sty, and shunned by every one; but at last the devil, in pity, provided him with more comfortable quarters, sending him to a physician

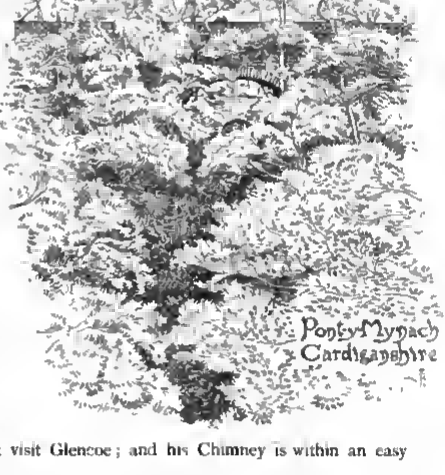
Little Orme's Head and the Cave of Devils

who was in want of an assistant. Thereupon Bastian began to make love to the leech's daughters. The two eldest, who were very ugly, would have nothing to say to him; but the youngest, who was extremely pretty, consented to give him her hand in marriage. Then the devil scraped his servant so clean, and dressed him up so grandly, and gave him so much money, that the two elder sisters, out of envy and mortification, made away with themselves, one by hanging herself in the neighbouring wood, and the other by drowning herself in the river. Thus the devil got two souls instead of one.

Another story which shows the fiend in a favourable light is that told of a tyrannical and ungodly nobleman of Voigtlands and his old servant, whom he had ordered to perform a task far beyond his strength—to cut down a huge oak tree and bring it up to the castle. While the poor man stood in amazement, dreading his master's fury, the devil appeared to him in human form, and bade him go home without troubling himself further about the matter, for he would undertake the job himself with his own team. He actually tore up the great tree by its roots, and

dragged it just as it was, without lopping off any of the branches, into the gateway of the castle, where it stuck fast, and could not be moved either backwards or forwards. The nobleman was forced to make a breach in the wall ere he could gain an entrance into his own mansion. The tree remained where it had stuck till the end of last century, and thousands of people used to flock from all quarters to see it. The wood, if tradition is to be credited, became harder than the hardest iron, and when it was struck gave out sparks. The team that the infernal woodman had employed is said to have been one, not of horses or oxen, but of shadows resembling the nobleman's most wicked ancestors.

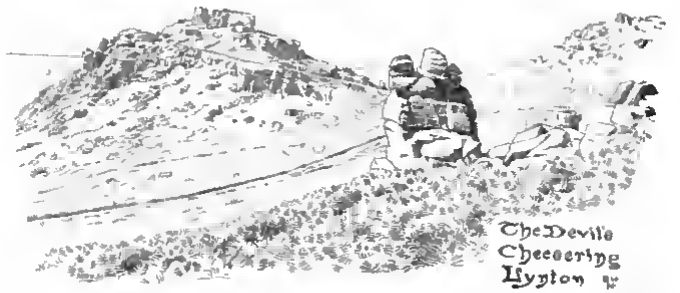
Of places connected with the devil in popular belief, from their gloomy, terrible, or otherwise extraordinary aspect, some are regarded as his accustomed haunts, others as his special handiwork, or at least as bearing traces of diabolical agency, and others again as stamped with some suggestive family likeness.



Without stepping beyond the limits of the British Isles, we may find illustrations of the first class in the Devil's Island, which frowns over Muckross Lake, Killarney; a Devil's Glen in Wicklow, as well as in Wales*, the Devil's Point at Plymouth; the Devil's Water, a tributary of the Tyne, near Hexham; the Cave of Devils, at Little Orme's Head; the Devil's Pit, at Cadgewith, Cornwall; a Devil's Hole in Jersey, and another near Lough Erne, in Ireland. On Marlborough Downs there is a dolmen or cromlech known as the Devil's Den; and at Castleton in Derbyshire is a cavern called the Devil's Cellar. To find the Devil's Kitchen we must go to Llyn Idwal, in North Wales; to mount his Staircase one must visit Glencoe; and his Chimney is within an easy walk of Cheltenham.

In some of these names the fiend's workmanship is perhaps implied as well as his patronage. Traces of his toil are seen in freaks of Nature and prodigies of human skill the origin of which has been long forgotten. For instance, the Devil's Dyke, near Brighton, is a deep "combe" in the chalk downs; whereas the Devil's Dyke (or Ditch) on Newmarket Heath, like another in Hampshire, near Andover, is an ancient earthwork. Tintagel or Tintageux (*i.e.* Devil's Castle), in the Isle of Sark, is a massive crag, but the Cornish Tintagel is a mediæval ruin. The Deil's Brig, at Holborn Head, near Thurso, is a natural arch, while there are at least half a dozen Devil's Bridges in various parts of the world constructed by human hands. Wales alone has two—the well-known *Pont-y-Mynach*, or Monks' Bridge, not far from Aberystwith, and another at Morben, near Machynlleth. England has one of her own at the head of Wensleydale. The Devil's Highway, which passes through the ancient

* It is in the Vale of Neath, Glamorganshire.



Calleva, now Silchester, is a Roman road; the Devil's Tower is a part of Windsor Castle; and the Devil's Buttery belongs to the Tower of London. There is an old brick building in a gloomy situation near Langley Priory, Norfolk, known in the neighbourhood as the Devil's House; and the same ill omened name was formerly given to a lonely hostelry off Gallion's Reach, on the Essex bank of the Thames.

Among other physical marvels attributed to infernal agency are the Devil's Punch-bowls, which are numerous enough and large enough to satisfy the thirst of a wandering Gargantua, provided they were full of liquor; but unfortunately the only one that is not dry (being a tarn at the top of Mangerton, a mountain near Killarney), though it contains plenty of water, lacks the most important ingredient. One of these circular valleys or pits is within easy reach of the Londoner, and used to be still better known in coaching days, for the old Portsmouth road runs along its edge, as it crosses Hindhead, on the south-west border of Surrey; another is in the county of Rutland, and a fourth on St Agnes, one of the Scilly Isles. A deep depression among the hills near Moffat, in the south of Scotland, is familiarly spoken of as the Deil's Beef Tub.

Names that suggest his spiteful or sportive humour are impressed upon certain places, as the Devil's Scratch, on the ruined chapel of St. Pancras at Canterbury, the Devil's Bit, in Long Range, Killarney, and the mountains in Tipperary which bear the same name. The Devil's Arrows are three immense monoliths near Boroughbridge, in Yorkshire; the Devil's Quoits are two (where there were formerly three) large stones near Stanton Harcourt, in Oxfordshire; and the Devil's Jumps, near Frensham, in Surrey, are a series of low hills, whereas those on Marden Down, Sussex, are artificial tumuli.

Tokens of other more or less mundane occupations are left in such local names as the Devil's Cheese-Ring, at Lynton, which means a knife or scoop, by no means the same thing as the Cheese-Wring (or press) near Liskeard; the Devil's Mill, a cascade on the river Devon, near Dollar—so called, the native will tell you, because it never ceases work upon the Sabbath; the Devil's Pulpit, on the left bank of the Wye, opposite Tintern Abbey; the Devil's Frying-pan, at Cadgewith, in Cornwall (also called the Devil's Pit), the Devil's Spoon, not far from Petersfield; the Devil's Caldron, near Comrie, Perthshire; the Devil's Limekiln, on Lundy Island; and the Devil's Bellows, in the vicinity of Charmouth, Dorset, and also at Kynance Cove. All these are natural curiosities; but the Devil's Drop is the name given to the remains of an old beacon on a hill near Dover; and the Devil's Seat, in Great Yarmouth church, is a natural object turned to an artificial use, being made out of the jawbone of a whale, and its uncanny appellation is due to the belief that any one who sits on it will be unfortunate ever afterwards.

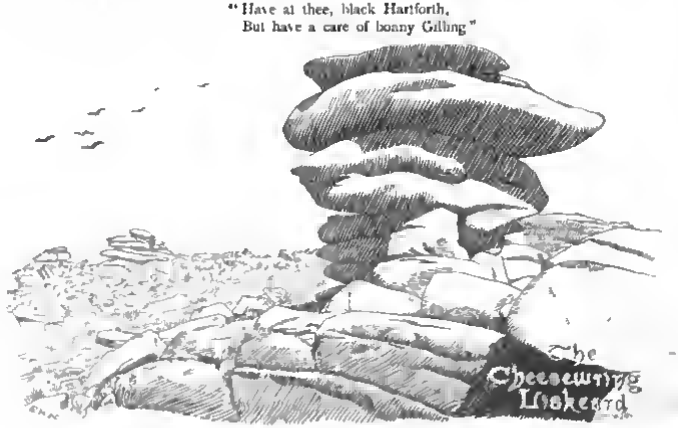
There is a mountain in Connemara which bears the odd sobriquet of the

Devil's Mother; and various portions of his own frame are scattered over far distant quarters of our island. Cromer Bay, from its dangerous navigation, used to be called by sailors the Devil's Throat, another being found in a cavern at Kynance Cove; the Devil's Elbow is encountered in Glen Lyon, Perthshire; the Devil's Head (possibly an old tavern sign) is the name given to an old building near Warley Barracks, in Essex; and in Thorndon Park, hard by, there is a dilapidated archway, rough inside with jagged stones, known as the Devil's Mouth. "Old Harry" must have a quick succession of toe-nails, if the rustic is right in the way in which he accounts for the presence of a certain fossil in the Lower Lias; and if all belemnites are the Devil's Fingers, as they are called in some places, there is still greater room for wonder at the number he must have discarded. In botanical folk-lore the devil has not only left his mark on a herb once highly esteemed for its medicinal virtues by biting off most of the root, whence its name of Devil's-bit scabious; but his claws, eyes, hands, horn, etc., are all to be met with in different plants.

The infernal wardrobe has supplied but scanty material for local names. A heap of rocks in Upper Wharfedale is known as the Devil's Apronful; and a zigzag piece of swampy ground between two ditches, leading from Bermondsey to Rotherhithe, was formerly entitled the Devil's Neckinger (*i.e.* Neck-kerchief).

Isolated boulders are often popularly supposed to have dropped out of the foul fiend's clutches into their present position; as is the case with the Agglestone or Haggerstone, near Studland, in Dorsetshire. The devil, it seems, was carrying this enormous rock through the air, intending to drop it upon the spire of Salisbury Cathedral, against which he had a special spite because of its surpassing beauty, when he found his claws loosening their grip through weariness, and, unable to hold it any longer, he let the unwieldy mass fall upon Studland heath, where it has lain from that day forth. The tradition attached to the big block of stone on a moor not far from Richmond, in Yorkshire, is also one of foiled malevolence. Once upon a time the devil was wroth with the people of Hartforth, perhaps because they were too good for him, and in his rage picked up a huge stone, lifted it on high with one hand, and threw it at the village against which he had a grudge, muttering these words

"Have at thee, black Hartforth,
But have a care of bonny Gilling"



In his wish not to harm the latter place, which lay between him and Hartforth, he missed his aim, and the stone, which flew whizzing through the air, fell far beyond the mark, and now lies, bearing the impression of his unholy fingers, on the rising ground to the north side of Gatherley Moor.* There is a somewhat similar German story, to the effect that the devil and his grandmother were one day amusing themselves at a place called Russdorf, by throwing stones as far as they could for a wager. The devil's missiles flew all the way to Rothhugel (which it would take a man an hour to reach on foot), whereas the stones which the old lady threw may still be seen lying by themselves in the immediate neighbourhood of Russdorf. The large boulder on the beach at the mouth of the river Irt, near Drigg, in Cumberland is said to have been chosen by the devil to form the foundation of a bridge which he was set upon building between the mainland and the Isle of Man. But when he had flown across country as far as the coast, carrying the stone in his apron with the end of one of the strings tied round it for additional security, a sudden gust of wind tugged it out of his grasp; the fastening broke, and down fell the rock, which yet shows the mark of the apron-string upon it! Two or three great stones on the margin of Semmer Water, a small lake off Wensleydale, are said to have fallen there during a fierce battle between the devil and a giant, who pelted each other from opposite hills.

The former's fondness for throwing stones, which do not always hit the mark, is also illustrated by the legend of the Friar's Heel, at Stonehenge. It is a block sixteen feet high, now in a slanting position. The story goes that, as his infernal majesty was constructing Stonehenge, he said to himself, with a chuckle, that no one would ever know how it was done. A friar, who happened to be close by, overheard the remark, and immediately retorted, "That's more than thee can tell." As the devil turned upon him in a rage the friar fled for his life, and the big stone that was flung after him did no worse damage than that of grazing his heel.

The black stone from which Helston derived its name, according to common report, was carried off by the devil, so says a Cornish legend, when he found it covering the mouth of the pit from which he wished to escape on one of his many marauding expeditions through the country. As he went over hill and dale he cast this huge stone before him, just as a child might play with a pebble. But on his way he met with the archangel Michael, and a conflict followed in which the foul fiend was worsted, and the stone dropped from his hand and gave a name to the town which was built in after times beside it. Fragments of the devil's granite

* Longstaffe's "Richmondshire."

plaything may still be examined embedded in the wall of a modern Assembly Room; but it was for long shown intact behind the Angel Inn. Dilston, near Hexham, is apparently a contracted form of Devil's Stone, analogous to the change of devilkin into dicken or dickens; a derivation that is all the more likely from the proximity of a small stream called the Devil's Burn, or Devil's Water, which has been already mentioned.

At Cologne is to be seen a *Teufelsstein*, which (like the Agglestone that never reached Salisbury) had been impotently hurled at the cathedral from the *Siebengebirge* by Satan, in his wrath at having been foiled by one more cunning than himself. For the architect, so it is said, was one day wandering by the river side, and had just hit upon a design which pleased him so much that he exclaimed, "This is the very thing!" when he heard some one behind his back saying, "I can show you a better one"; and the devil, for it was none other than he, displayed his own plan, which was incomparably finer, and offered it to him on the condition of forfeiting his salvation. The astonished architect looked long and earnestly at the roll spread before him; but, when he had mastered every detail, he affected to treat the design with contempt, and refused the bargain. The fiend, finding himself cheated, went away in a rage, uttering these words: "You may build your cathedral after my plans, but in that case you shall never finish it,"—a prediction which held good for many centuries. According to another tradition, what the devil said was that he would lead a rivulet from Treves to Cologne before the other could finish his church—in allusion probably to the old Roman aqueduct, as Grimm suggests.

The Devil's Apron, which has already more than once presented itself to our notice, occurs again in connection with that building of bridges for which he seems to have a decided *penchant*. Hell Gill is a wild chasm to the north-west of Wensleydale, so narrow in one part that a man might leap across it. Some forty feet below flows Hell Gill Beck, which is really the river Eden in its infancy, here forming the boundary between Westmorland and Yorkshire. Close to the bridge over the chasm may be seen what look like the foundations of a more ancient structure, which are attributed to diabolonian industry; but, while busily using his apron to fetch stones for the completion of his task, the devil is said to have lost this episcopal article of apparel, which tumbled into the stream and was swept along into the Kail-Pot, a rocky caldron reputed to be of unfathomable depth, which has never since ceased to boil and bubble.

The Devil's Bridge, in Cardiganshire, about a dozen miles from Aberystwith, like the more famous arch over the foaming Reuss on the St. Gothard Pass, has been superseded by a more convenient means of communication. It is remarkable, too,

that an almost identical legend is told concerning the Welsh and Swiss bridges. In the former it takes this shape: An old crone had lost her only cow, and, after searching for it far and wide, she suddenly saw it on the other side of the deep glen of the Mynach. Now, it was the devil who had brought it there, and he hoped to get possession of the old woman's soul by laying for her a cunning trap. Pretending to pity her, he said he would build a bridge for her to fetch the cow, and was straightway as good as his word. But the first living creature that should cross was destined to become his prey. The old dame, knowing this, and bent upon baffling the enemy of souls, began fumbling awhile in her pocket, and then, bringing out a crust of bread, threw it clear over the bridge. Her little dog, which had been watching her, lost no time in running across to get it, and so the mongrel cur became the Devil's toll, instead of a human being.

The Swiss version of the story is told in the poet Longfellow's "Golden Legend." The chief point of difference between the two is found in the person who outwits the fiend—a woman in the former case, an abbot in the latter, who is moreover the actual builder of the bridge, by diabolical permission. In other similar legends of the infernal *Pontifex Maximus*, it is a cock or a chamois that is made to run first across the newly-constructed bridge. In one French story it is every thirteenth passenger that is claimed as tribute; and, after numerous captures, a certain holy man breaks the spell, and shuts the devil up in a tower, from which he can only make his escape after a whole year spent in mounting a staircase of three hundred and sixty-five steps at the rate of one a day. Sometimes it is the last instead of the first foot that becomes his prize, in accordance with our proverbial saying, "Devil take the hindmost!"

There is a Spanish tale that relates not indeed to a bridge, but to a cave at Salamanca which he was said to have tenanted, and where he taught successive sets of seven pupils, his terms being that the last of each lot should pay in person for them all. On one occasion, when a party of them was taking leave, and the seventh was told to stay behind, the lad pointed to his shadow, saying that that was the last; and with it the devil had to be content. So the student escaped, and went without a shadow all the rest of his life.

A Portuguese tradition about a Devil's Bridge may be compared with those already given. It is that of Domingos Terne, over the river Ave. The devil, it is said, wishing to help a pair of lovers who were parted by the stream, used to throw a bridge across it every night, so as to enable the youth to visit his sweetheart. But one night a priest set himself to watch, and as soon as the young fellow had passed over he suddenly uttered an exorcism, and the devil never took the bridge away any more.

R. Bruce Boswell.

Newlyn, Cornwall

HU-GUE-NIN'S WIFE

HUGUENIN, my friend—the man of Art and thrills and impulses,—the finished *boulevardier*, the *persifleur*—must, I concluded with certainty, be frenzied. So, at least, I reasoned when, after long years of silence, I received from him this letter:

"'*Sdili*, my friend—that is the name by which they now call this island Delos. Wherefore has it been written, 'so passeth the glory of the world.'

"Ah! but to me it is as to *her* it was still Delos, the Sacred Island, the birthplace of Apollo, son of Leto! On the summit of Cynthus I look from my dwelling, and within the wide reach of the Cyclades perceive even yet the fruity offerings arriving from Syria, from Sicily, from Egypt; I see the barks that bring the sacred envoys of Pan Ionium to festival—I note the flutter of their hallowed garments—on the breeze once more floats to me their 'Songs of Deliverance.'

"The island now belongs almost entirely to me. I am, too, almost its sole inhabitant. It is, you know, only four miles long, and half as broad, and I have purchased every available foot of its surface. On the flat top of the granite Cynthus I live, and here, my friend, shall I die. Chains more inexorable and horrible than any which the limbs of Prometheus ever knew bind me to this crag.

"A friend! a friend! That is the thing after which my sick spirit pants. A *living man*: of the dead I have enough; of living monsters, ah, too much! An aged servant or two, who seem persistently to shun me—this is all I possess of human fellowship. Would that I dared to ask you, an old companion, to come to the solace of a sinking man in this place of desolation!"

The letter continued long in this strain of mingled rhapsody and despair, containing, moreover, a lengthy disquisition on the Pythagorean doctrine of the metempsychosis of the soul. Three times did the words "living monsters" occur. Such a communication, coming from *him*, did not fail to excite my utmost curiosity and pity.

From London to Delos is no inconsiderable journey, yet, conquered during the course of a long vacation by an irresistible impulse, and the fond memories of other

days, I actually found myself, on a starry night, disembarking on the sands that bound the once famous harbour of the tiny Greek island. My arrival may be dated by the fact that it fell out just two months before the very extraordinary natural phenomena of which Delos was the scene during the night of August 13th, 1880. I crossed the ring of flat land which nearly encircles the islet, and began the ascent of the central mountain. The slumberous air languished with the wild breath of rose and jessamine and almond; the pipe of the cicala and the gleam of the firefly were not wanting to add to the narcotic charms of this land of dreams. In less than an hour I walked into a tangled garden, and placed my hand on the shoulder of a tall, stooping man, dressed in Attic attire, who walked solitary under the trees.

With a fearful start he turned and faced me.

"Oh," he said, panting, and placing both his hands upon his chest, "I was greatly surprised! My heart——"

He could utter no more. It was Huguenin, and yet not he. The heavy beard rolling down his white woollen garments was, I could see, still black as ever; but the masses of unkempt hair which floated with every zephyr about his face and neck were bleached to the whiteness of snow. He stared at me through the dull and cavernous eyes of a man long dead.

We walked into the house together. The mere sight of the building was enough to convince me that in some mysterious way, to some morbid degree, the Past had fettered and darkened the intellect of my friend. The mansion was of the purely Hellenic type, but nothing less than inconceivable in extent—a wilderness rather than a habitation. I found myself in an ancient Greek house—only, a Greek house multiplied many times over into an endless, continuous congeries of Greek houses. It consisted of a single story, though here and there on the vast flat roof there rose a second layer of apartments. These latter were reached by ladders. We walked through a door—opening inwards—into a passage, which in turn led us to an oblong marble court-yard; this was the *aule*, surrounded by Corinthian pillars, and having in the centre an altar of stone to *Zeus Herkeios*. Around this court on every hand was ranged a series of halls, chambers, *thalamoi*, hung with rich velvets; and the whole mighty house—made up of a hundred and a hundred reproductions of such court-yards with their surrounding chambers—formed a trackless desert of rooms, through whose uniform labyrinths the most cunning would assuredly fail to find his way.

"This building," said Huguenin to me, some days after my arrival, "this building—every stone, plank, drapery of it—was the creation of my wife's wild and restless fancy."

I stared at him.

"You doubt that I have, or had, a wife? Come, then, with me; you shall—you shall—see her face."

He led the way through the dark and windowless house, lighted throughout the day and night by the dim purple radiance shed from many small, open lamps of earthenware filled with the fragrant *nardinum*, an oil pressed from the flower of the Arabian grass *nardus*.

I followed the emaciated figure of Huguenin through a great number of the gloomy chambers. As he moved slowly forward, visibly panting, I noticed that he kept his form bent downward, seeming to seek for something, and this something I soon found to be a scarlet thread, laid down to afford guidance for the feet through the mazes of the house, and running along the black floor. Suddenly he stopped before the door of one of the apartments called *amphithalamoi*, and, himself remaining without, motioned to me to enter.

I am not a man of what might be called "a tremulous diathesis," yet not without

a tremor did I glance round the room. For a time I could discern nothing under the sombre glimmer radiated from a single *lampas* pendent from wrought brazen chains. But at length a great painting in oils, unframed, occupying nearly one whole side of the chamber, grew upon my sight. It was the picture of a woman. My heart throbbed with a most strange, deep excitement as I gazed upon her lineaments.

She stood erect, robed in a flowing, crimson, embroidered *peplos*, with head slightly thrown back, and one hand and arm pointing stiffly outward and upward. The countenance was not merely Grecian—ancient Grecian, as distinct from modern—but it was so in a highly exaggerated and unlifelike degree. Was the woman, I asked myself, more lovely than ever mortal was before—or more hideous? She was the one or the other, or both; but the riddle baffled me. The Lamia of Keats arose before me—that "shape of gorgeous hue, vermilion-spotted, golden, green and blue." A hardly-breathing surprise of eyes held me fixed as the image slowly took possession of my vision. Here, then, I muttered, was the Gorgon's head, whose hair was serpents and her eye a basilisk's, and as I so thought, I reflected, too, on the myth of how from the dripping blood of Medusa's head strange creatures sprang to life; and then, with a shuddering abhorrence, I remembered Huguenin's childish ravings about "monsters." I drew nearer, in order to analyse the impression almost of dread wrought upon me, and I quickly found—or thought I found—the key. It lay, surely, in the woman's eyes. They were the very eyes of the tiger: circular, green, large, with glittering yellow radii. I hurried from the room.

"You have seen her?" asked Huguenin, with a cunning, eager distortion of his ashen face.

"Yes, Huguenin, I have seen her. She is very beautiful."

"She painted it herself," he said in a whisper.

"Really!"

"She considered herself—she *was*—the greatest painter who has lived since Apelles."

"But now—where is she now?"

He brought his lips quite close to my ear.

"She is dead. You, at any rate, would call her so."

This ambiguity appeared to me only the more singular when I discovered that it was his habit, at stated intervals, to make regular and stealthy visits to distant parts of the dwelling. Our bed-chambers being contiguous, I could not fail, as time passed, to notice that he would rise in the dead of night, when he supposed me asleep, and gathering together the fragments of our last meal, depart rapidly and silently with them through the dim and vast house, led always in one particular direction by the scarlet thread of silk which ran along the floor.

I now set myself strenuously to the study of Huguenin. The nature of his physical malady, at least, was clear. He laboured under the singular affection to which physicians have given the name of Cheyne Stoke's Respiration, the disease manifesting itself at intervals by compelling him to lie back in a perfect agony of inhalation, and groan for air; the bones of his cheeks seemed on the point of appearing through their sere wrapping of mummy-skin; the *ala* of his nose never rested from an extravagance of expansion and retraction. But even this ruin of a body might, I considered, be made partially whole, were it not that to lull the rage and fever of such a *mind* the world contained no anodyne. For one thing, a most curious belief in some unnamed fate hanging over the island on which he lived haunted him. Again and again he recalled to me all that in the long past had been written about Delos: the strange notion contained both in the Homeric and the Alexandrian hymns to the Delian Apollo that the island was *floating*, or that

it was merely secured by chains; or that it had only been thrown up from the deeps as a temporary resting-place for Ortygia in her travail; or that it might *sink* before the spurning foot of the new-born god. He was never tired, through long hours, of pursuing, as if in soliloquy, a kind of somnolent, mystical exegesis of such passages as we read together. "Do you know," he said, "that the ancients really supposed the streams of Delos to rise and fall with the rise and fall of the Nile? Could anything point more clearly to a belief in the extraordinary nature of the island, its far-reaching volcanic affinities, occult geologic eccentricities?" Often would he repeat the punning hexameter line of the very ancient Sibylline prophecy—

ἔσται καὶ Σάμος ἄμμος ἰσεῖται Δῆλος ἄδηλος,*

often, too, having repeated it, he would strike from the repining chords of an Æolian lyre the air of a threnody which, as he told me, his wife had composed to suit the verse; and when to the funeral wail of this dirge—so wild, so mournful, that I could never hear it without a shudder—Huguenin added the melancholy note of his now hollow and plaintive voice, the intensity of effect produced on me reached the intolerable degree, and I was glad of the dubious and pallid and purple gloaming of the mansion, which partially hid my face from him.

"Observe, however," he added one day, "the meaning of the implied epithet 'far-seen' as applied to Delos. It means 'glorious,' 'illustrious'—far seen to the spiritual rather than to the bodily eye, for the island is not very mountainous. The words 'sink from sight' must therefore be supposed to have the corresponding significance of an extinction of this glory. And now judge whether or no this prophecy has not been already fulfilled, when I tell you that this sacrosanct land, which no dog's foot was once allowed to touch, on which no man was permitted to be born or to die, bears at this moment on its bosom a monster fouler than the brain of demon ever conceived. A fearful literal and physical fulfilment of the prophecy cannot, I consider, be far distant."

That all this esotericism was not native to Huguenin I was certain. His mind, I was convinced, had been ploughed into by some tremendous energy, before ever this rank growth had choked it. I drew him on, little by little, to speak of his wife.

She was, he told me, of a very antique Athenian family, which by constant effort had conserved its purity of blood. It was while passing southward through Greece in a world-weary mood, some years before my visit, that he came one night to the village of Castri; and there, on the site of the ancient Delphi, in the centre of an angry crowd of Greeks and Turks, who threatened to rend her to pieces, he first saw Andromeda, his wife. "This incredible courage," he said, "this vast originality was hers, to take upon herself the part of a modern Hypatia—to venture on the task of the bringing back of the gods, in the midst of a fanatical people, at the latter end of a century like the present. The furious mob from which I rescued her was standing around her in front of the vestibule of a just completed temple to Apollo, whose worship she was then and there attempting to restore."

The love of the woman fastened on her preserver with passionate intensity. Huguenin felt himself constrained by the impulse of an irresistible Will. They were united, and came at her bidding to live in the grey abode of her creation at Delos. In this solitude, under this shadow, the man and the woman faced each other. As the months passed the husband found that he had married a seer of visions and a dreamer of dreams. And visions of what hue! and dreams of what madness! He confessed to me that he was greatly awed by her, and with this awe was blended a feeling which, if it was not fear, was akin to fear. That he loved her

* "And Samos shall be sand, and Delos (the far seen) sunk from sight."

"Like a rapt, delirious Pythoness."

not at all he now knew, while the excess of her passion for him he grew to regard with the hate which men feel for the distilled elixir of the hemlock. Yet his mind inevitably took on the lurid hue of hers. He drank in unfailingly all her creeds. He followed her in the same way that a satellite follows a world. When for days together she hid herself from him and disappeared, he would wander desolate and full of search over the pathless house. Finding that she habitually yielded her body to the lotus delights of certain opiate seeds produced on the island, he found the courage to frown and warn, and ended by himself becoming a bond-slave to the drowsy *ganja* of India. So too with the most strange fascination she exercised over the animal world: he disliked it—he dreaded it; regarded it as excessive and unnatural; but he looked on only with the furtive, pale eye of suspicion, and said nothing. When she walked she was accompanied by a long magnetised *queue* of living things, felines in particular, and birds of large size. Dogs, on the contrary, shunned her, bristling. She had brought with her from the mainland a collection of these followers, of which Huguenin had never seen the half; they were imprisoned in unknown nooks of the building; ever and anon she would vanish from the house, to reappear with new companions. Her kindness to these dumb creatures should, I presume, have been amply sufficient to account for her power over them; but Huguenin's mind, already grown morbid, probed darkly after some other explanation. The primary *motif* of this unquietness doubtless lay in his wife's fanaticism on the subject of the Pythagorean theory of the transmigration of souls. On this theme Andromeda, it was clear, was violently deranged. She would stand, he declared, with outstretched arm, with eye wild-staring, with rigid body, and in a rapid, guttural recitative—like a rapt, delirious Pythoness—would prophesy of the eternal mutations prepared for the spirit of man. She would dwell, above all, with a kind of contempt, on the limitations of animal forms in the actual world, and would indignantly insist that the spirit of an extraordinary and original man, disembodied, *should and must* re-embody itself in a correspondingly extraordinary and original form. "And," she would often add, "such forms do really exist on the earth, but the God, willing to save the race from frenzy, hides them from the eyes of common men."

It was long, however, before I could induce Huguenin to speak of the final catastrophe of his singular wedded life. He related it in these words:—

"You now know that Andromeda was among the great painters of the world—you have seen her picture of herself. One day, after dilating, as was her wont, on the narrow limitation of forms, she said suddenly, 'But you, too, shall be of the initiated: come, come, you shall see *something*.' She went swiftly forward, beckoning, looking back repeatedly to smile on me a loving patronage, with the condescension of a priestess to a neophyte; I followed, till before a lately finished painting she stopped, pointing. I will not attempt—the attempt would be folly—to tell you what thing of horror and madness I saw before me on the canvas; nor can I explain in words the tempest of anger, of loathing and disgust, that stirred within me at the sight. Kindled by the blasphemy of her fancy, I raised my hand to strike her head, and to this hour I know not if I struck her. My hand, it is true, felt the sensation of contact with something soft and yielding; but the blow, if blow there were, was surely too slight to harm the frame of a creature far feebler than the human. Yet she fell; the film of coming death grew over her dull, upbraiding eyes; one last word only she spoke, pointing to the Uncleanness: 'In the flesh you may yet behold it!' and so, still pointing, pointing, she passed away.

"I bore her body, embalmed in the Greek manner by an expert of Corinth, to one of the smaller apartments on the roof of the house. I saw, as I turned to leave her in the gloom of the strait and lonely chamber, the mortal smile on her

waxen face within the open coffin. Two weeks later I went again to visit her. My friend, she had vanished utterly—save that the bones remained, and from the vacant coffin, above the now fleshless skull, two eyes—living—the very eyes of Andromeda's soul, but full of a new-born, intenser light—the eyes, too, of the pictured horror whose whole form I now discerned in the darkness—gleamed out upon me. I slammed to the door, and fainted on the floor."

"The suggestion," I said, "which you seem to wish to convey is that of a transition of forms from the human to the animal; but, surely, the explanation that the monster, brought secretly by your wife into the house, imprisoned unawares by you with the dead, and maddened by hunger, fed on the uncovered body, is, if not less horrible, at least less improbable."

He looked doubtingly at me for a moment, and then replied: "There was no monster imprisoned with the dead. Be not rash with 'explanations.' You do not require me to tell you, what you must know, that there are many more things in earth—to say nothing of heaven—than were ever dreamt of in your philosophy."

But at least, I urged, he would see the necessity of flying from that place. He answered with the extraordinary avowal that it was no longer doubtful to him, from the effect which any neglect to minister to the creature's wants produced on his own bodily health, that his life was intimately bound up with the life of the being he stayed to maintain; that with the *second* murder of which he should be guilty—nay, with the very attempt to commit it, as, for example, by flight from the house—his own life would inevitably be forfeited.

I accordingly formed the resolution to work the deliverance of my friend in spite of himself. Two months had now passed; the end of my visit was drawing near, yet his maladies of brain and body were not alleviated. It tortured me to think of leaving him once more alone, a prey to the maniac which distracted him.

That very day, while he slept his damp, unquiet, opiate slumbers, I started out on the track indicated by the scarlet thread. So far it led—and the rooms through which it passed were of such uniformity, and the path so serpentine, and the sameness of construction on every hand so unbroken—that I could not doubt but that, the clue once snapped at any point, the journey to the desired end could be accomplished only by the most improbable good fortune. I followed the thread to its termination—it stopped at the foot of a ladder-like stair, which I ascended. At the top of the stair, and close to it, I was faced by a narrow wall, in which was a closed wooden door, in the door a hole large enough to admit the hand. As I placed my foot on the topmost step, a long, low, plaintive whine, with a sickening likeness to a human wail, broke upon my ear.

I hurriedly descended the steps. Some little distance from them I broke the silken thread, and, gathering it up in my hand as I went, again broke it near the region of the house which we occupied.

"Hereby," I said, as I held the gathered portion to the flame of a lamp, "shall a soul be saved alive."

I watched him later on through half-closed lids, as he departed, haggard and shivering, on his nightly errand. My heart throbbed under an agony of disquiet while I awaited his long-delayed return.

He came swiftly and softly into my room, and shook me by the shoulder. On his face was a look of unusual calmness, of dignity and mystery.

"Wake up," he said. "I wish you—I am a sorry host, am I not?—I wish you to leave me to-night, at once, to leave the island—*now*."

"But tell me——" I gasped.

"Nay, nay; I will take no refusal. Trust me this once, and go. There is a

danger here. Destiny is against me—an impudent destiny, careless even to conceal its hand. Go. One or two of the fisher-folk of the harbour will convey you over to Rhenea before the morning light, and you will be saved."

"But saved from what?"

"From what? I cannot tell you from the destiny, whatever it be, which awaits me. Do you know—can you dream—that the thread on which my life depends is *snapped*?"

"But suppose I tell you——"

"You can tell me nothing. Ah . . . . . you hear that?"

He held up his hand and listened. It was a sudden shriek of the wind around the house.

"It is but the rising wind," I muttered, starting up.

"Ah, but that—that which followed. Did you not *feel* it?"

"Huguenin, I felt nothing."

He had clasped with both arms a marble pillar, against which his forehead rested, while with one foot he gently and mechanically patted the floor. In this posture, now utterly demoralised and craven, he remained for some minutes. The wail of the wind was heard at intervals. Suddenly he turned towards me, with a ghastly face and the scream of a frightened woman.

"Now—now at least—*you feel it!*"

I could no longer deny. It was as if the whole island had gently rocked to and fro on a pivot.

Thoroughly unnerved myself, trembling more with awe than with terror, I seized Huguenin's arm, and sought to draw him from the pillar, which, muttering low, he still embraced. He sullenly refused to stir; and I, resolved in any event to stay by him, sat near. The seismic agitation increased. But he seemed to take no further note of anything,—only, with the regularity of a clock's oscillations, the tripudiary automatic motion of his foot persisted. In this way an hour, two hours, passed. At the end of that time the rocking movement of the earth had become intense, rapid and continuous.

There came a moment when, overwhelmed by a new panic, I sprang to my feet and shook him.

"Headstrong man!" I cried, "have you then parted with every sense? Do you not smell—can you not feel—that the house is in flames?"

His eyes, which had grown dark and dull, blazed up instantly with a new madness.

"Then," he shouted, with the roar of a clarion,—"then she shall—I say she *shall* be saved! The cheetah—*the feathered cheetah!*"

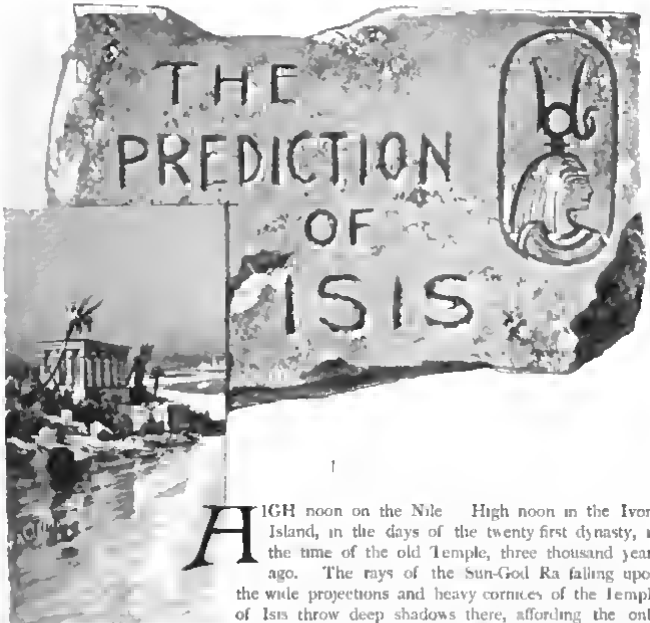
Before I could lay hold of the now foaming maniac, he had dashed past me into a corridor. I followed behind in hottest pursuit. The carpets and hangings, as yet but dully glowing, filled the passages with the smoke of Tophet. I hoped that Huguenin, weak of lung, would fall choked and exhausted. Some power seemed to lend him strength—he rushed onward like the wind; some sure, mysterious instinct seemed to guide him—not once did he falter or hesitate.

The long chase through the cracking house, burning now on every side, was over. The just intuitions of insanity had not failed the madman—he reached the goal for which he panted. I saw him hasten up the half-consumed ladder, whose foot was already in a lake of flame. He rushed to the smouldering wooden door of the tomb of Andromeda, and tore it wide open. And now from out the vault there burst—above the roaring of the fire, and the whistle of the tempest, and the thousandfold rattle of the earthquake—a shrill and raucous shriek, which turned my blood to ice;

and I saw proceeding from the darkness a creature whose native loathsomeness human language has no vocabulary to describe. For if I say that it was a cheetah —of very large size—its eyes a yellow liquid conflagration—its fat and boneless body swathed in a thick panoply of dark grey feathers, vermilion-tipped—with a similitude of miniature wings on its back—with a wide, vast, downward-sweeping tail like the tail of a bird of paradise,—how by such words can I image forth all the retching nausea, all the bottomless hate and fear, with which I looked? The fire, it was evident, had already reached the body of the beast; already it flamed. I saw it fly, rather than spring, at Huguenin's head; the burial of its fangs in his flesh, the meeting of its teeth about his windpipe, I saw. He tottered—gurgling—tearing at the feathery horror—backward over the spot where a moment before the stair had stood; together they fell into the sea of flame beneath.

I ran in headlong haste from the house, discovering by good chance an egress. The night was clear, yet all the winds seemed to tumble in disenchained ecstacy about the islet. As I descended I noted the scathed and scorched aspect of the trees and of certain of the rocks, at one spot a multitude of deep, smooth, conical openings, edged with grey, glowing scoriæ, riveted my attention. Still lower, I stood on a bluff promontory and looked sheer into the sea. The sight was sublime and appalling. The deep—without billow or foam or ripple—luminous far down with phosphorescences—rushed, like some lambent lamina yoked to the fiery steeds of Diomedes, with a steady, intense, almost dazzling impetuosity towards the island. Delos, indeed, seemed to *float*—to swim, painfully struggling, like a little doomed bird, against the all-engulfing element. I passed with the earliest light from this mystic shrine of ancient piety. Among the last sights that greeted my gaze was the still ascending reek of the blighted and accursed dwelling of Huguenin.

M. P. SHIEL.



I

HIGH noon on the Nile. High noon in the Ivory Island, in the days of the twenty first dynasty, in the time of the old Temple, three thousand years ago. The rays of the Sun-God Ra falling upon the wide projections and heavy cornices of the Temple of Isis throw deep shadows there, affording the only shaded spot in all the island. Father Sihor, rolling by, is one long riband of reflected light. The narrow belt of country on the cliffs above, spread with the meadows of millet and the fields of poppies in full bloom, is stretching hot and white away to the hills, which, with the nearer great red granite rocks, seem almost quivering in the fiery embrace of the Giver of Life and Bestower of all Things. But the fringe of the Temple is in the shade, as happens there at noon when the Sun-God rides in Cancer.

Where the meeting angles of the cornice throw the broadest shadow, a young man is lingering. His shaven head, the fine linen of his robe, and the leopard-skin he wears across his shoulders proclaim him of the ruling class, and a priest. Koreb, the priest of Isis, is awaiting the coming of his betrothed, Lala, daughter of Rama-hotep, High Priest of the Mighty Mystery; and although he appears troubled, as if something inauspicious were leavening his joy and some small cloud were rising on the horizon of his happiness, yet the darkness is dispelled, from his countenance at least, as Lala comes swiftly round the angle of the propylon, greeting him with a glad smile and half-eager, outstretched hands.

He seizes them feverishly and covers them with kisses.

"To-morrow, Lala," he murmurs, "this little hand will be mine for ever,—in this and in the life which is beyond."

"I think the present life the sweeter, Koreb. May it be long! for I doubt me if husband and wife again join loving hands together in Amenti. Yet let us

not dwell upon the future. Lovers exist but in the present, though to-morrow thou art to be my lord. May the Holy Mother bless our union! But thou lookest troubled, Koreb, and there is an abstraction in thy kisses, a reservation in thy clasp, which gives me pain. Tell me thou lovest me, looking into these eyes, Koreb, and the magic love which is therein shall arise and surround thee with a halo of happiness. Speak, Koreb."

"Lala, it is this very love of mine which is the cause of my oppression. Born of the passion I possess for thee came the reflection that ill and danger inevitably fall, at times, upon the heads of all who dwell upon this fate-encompassed earth. If sorrow can assail the Gods themselves—and was not Great Osiris slain by Set?—what hope have mortals of immunity? Mad with the desire to learn where those dangers to our love might be most expected, anxious to be in a measure forewarned and thus best able to avert their worst, I, last night, was guilty of a deed whose weight hangs gravely now upon my soul. Lala, I consulted the Oracle as to our future—that Oracle which is sacred, not to the affairs of the individual, but to the matters of the State alone. I, a poor priest of the Fourth Degree, presumed to question of that Voice which should be agitated only for the things which are vital and profound to the Three Countries. At midnight I crept into the Temple and, passing through the Hall of the six-and-thirty Forms of the Mystery, I threw myself upon the floor of the Holy Sanctuary. There I wrestled and prayed the night through, cutting my flesh—see, here are the unhealed wounds!—and exalting my spirit in hope the Mighty Mother would hear me; beseeching Her who Was, who Is, and who Will Be. And, lo! as I looked with rapt gaze upon the niche wherein reposes the Holy Symbol, my lips repeating the Invocation, I beheld the luminous cloud appear between the two horns; and the Voice—the Voice, Lala—arose from out the glowing mist which veils the Presence! Its consuming tones,

Lala, are ringing in my ears even now, as I recall those strange words of terrifying import :—

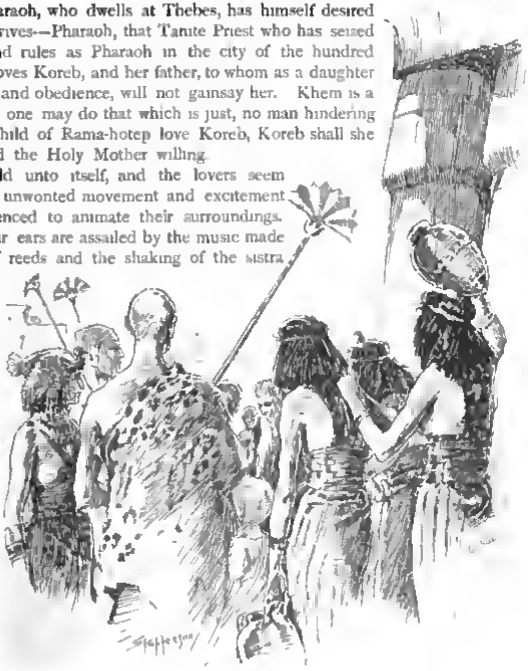
'The dust of the dead shall be light on the living'

And I swooned. When I recovered consciousness and crept forth, Ra was high in the heavens and all things seemed bright and joyous except my heart. Lala, those words have chilled my very soul, and I fear misfortune. 'The dust of the dead shall be light on the living'' I guess not the meaning; but when are the words of the Oracle understanded at their time of utterance? Yet do I not know the words of the Voice are chiefly full of woe, and the veil which hides the morrow is but parted to our pain?"

"Koreb," cried the girl, throwing her arms about his neck, "Koreb, thou art distraught and weary with thy long vigil in the Sanctuary. Put away thy forebodings, for thou *knowest* nothing, even now, neither let thine act wring thee as impious. Surely the Mighty Mother, Herself the First Cause by giving birth to Horus, will pardon the presumption of her servant upon a matter of marriage. Koreb, as thou lovest me, cast aside thy fears and—kiss me!"

The twining arms of the girl and the warm clinging of her kisses gradually break and chase away the mists which envelop the young priest's soul. Very lovely is Lala, daughter of the High Priest Rama-hotep. Her beauty is famous throughout the River, and Pharaoh, who dwells at Thebes, has himself desired her as one of his wives—Pharaoh, that Tanite Priest who has seized the triple crown and rules as Pharaoh in the city of the hundred gates. But Lala loves Koreb, and her father, to whom as a daughter she owes first duty and obedience, will not gainsay her. Khem is a free country, where one may do that which is just, no man hindering him; and if the child of Rama-hotep love Koreb, Koreb shall she wed, the Gods and the Holy Mother willing.

Love is a world unto itself, and the lovers seem scarcely alive to an unwonted movement and excitement which has commenced to animate their surroundings. It is not until their ears are assailed by the music made by the sounding of reeds and the shaking of the sistra that they become aware that a procession is about to emerge from the Temple to assist at the debarkation of the occupants of a boat which is now ascending the River. Immediately recognising his obvious duties, Koreb hastens to assume his place amid his fellows, while Lala mingles among the other women who are looking on at the solemn function.



From the peculiar decoration and furniture of the boat the initiated have for some time known that it contains an embassy of priests from Thebes itself, the shrine of the mighty Amen-Ra. Soon the procession of reception pours forth from the great courtyard of the Temple, Rama-hotep himself leading the way. With admirably timed movements the company reaches the broad steps leading to the River just as the visiting vessel, dexterously handled by Ethiopian slaves, draws alongside.

Then out stepped a tall and venerable man clad in a purple robe

"Greeting!" he cried. "Greeting! O Rama-hotep, most holy servant of the Heavenly Isis. Know thou that we bear letters and commands from the great Unspeakable Himself, the Illuminator of the Universe, who dwells in Heaven and who visits Thebes, by the words of the mouth of his true worshipper and High Priest, Pharaoh. Now, as thou knowest well, it is the custom of the servants of the King of Gods to seek out, from time to time, the most beauteous maidens in the land of Khem for the ministering of His Temple and for the service of the Unspeakable Himself. There, in return for their offices, are they admitted to a communion with the All-Powerful which is denied to the generality of our women. Thus do they the more perfectly prepare themselves for the life which is hereafter, and bring about a shortening of that sojourn in Amenti which fits the righteous for the Fields of Peace. Agree, then, O Rama-hotep, that the fame of thy daughter in her well-favouredness hath come to the ears of the Mighty God, and in His eyes, which see all things, hath she seemed pleasant; therefore, in the name of the Great Unspeakable, through the mouth of His servant Pharaoh, do I demand thy daughter Lala of thee for the service.'

He paused. Rama-hotep made obeisance, as was his duty, to the roll of papyrus and the signet which the speaker presented him. He answered nothing and betrayed no sign, but, raising his cedar wand as signal for his followers to range themselves around the visitors, he and they marched slowly back to the Temple. Koreb, who had heard the words of the Ambassadors, paced on with leaden footsteps in the procession. Misfortune had in truth come swiftly—punishment for his impiety. And Lala; she, too, had heard. Silent she stood among the throng of women. Pale to the lips, she shrank from the envious looks of some and the pitying gaze of others who knew the story of her betrothal. And the great company swept on through the propyla, through the great courtyard into the hall of the six-and-thirty Forms of the Mystery, where with one accord they bent the knee and worshipped.

II.

That night within the High Priest's house were Rama-hotep and his daughter plunged in grief; and to them came Koreb. His lover's heart was rent in twain by fierce emotions—grief at the imminent loss of his love, and vague, angry terror at what might prove the desecration of her body. For though it was ancient and legitimate custom to seek, at certain seasons, the most beautiful girls who might minister to the pleasure of the great Deity, yet it was a question at that time exercising certain among the initiated whether all the fruits of this ministry were due to the condescension of the God or to that of his High Priest and—as he chose to style himself—Avatar, Pharaoh. Had not this Pharaoh already offered Lala honourable place among his wives, and had not his offer been declined? Might he not be attempting to obtain as the priest that which had been denied to the monarch? Rama-hotep, who viewed all these things with the eyes of a father, was filled, in addition, with the deepest rage and mortification at the thought of his beloved Isis, the Mighty Mother

of All Things, being apparently deemed of less importance than the God of Thebes, and that Her Temple, ay, even the family of its High Priest, should be held contributory to the pleasure of the Theban Deity. But, alas, Pharaoh, who ruled the Three Countries, was of Thebes, and hence the tears with which Lala was bedewing her lover's breast. She was to lose him; she would never see him more. She would never quit the island alone. Rather than be taken to Thebes and be parted, living, from her betrothed, she would fling herself on Father Sihor's breast and trust to him to lull her griefs and float her away from her sorrows. She would drown herself in the Nile, and becoming Holy, as all are who find death in the river, she would be buried in the sacred pit at Syene, still near to Koreb and her beloved Temple. But if she went to Thebes she would curse the God to His face and then—and then . . .

Flinging her long dark tresses over her face and rending the bosom of her tunic, she beat her breasts fiercely with her hands. Then throwing herself heavily on the tiled floor, moaning and weeping, she rocked herself to and fro in her grief and agony. In truth, a sombre scene. Those high, dark, sculptured walls, with their painted effigies almost alive in the half gloom shed by the pale lamp, seemed to frown down upon the dishevelled, weeping figure on the floor, the overwrought, distracted lover, and the majestic form of the High Priest, in his embroidered robes, standing silent, with his cedar wand clenched tightly in his grasp and in his eyes the look which gazes inward rather than afar.

Then spoke Koreb.

"O my father, thou who hast communed with the Holy Mother Herself; thou who, scatheless, hast looked upon the lightnings which play in the mystic circles round the Presence, and who hast gazed, unstricken, on the fiery serpent which is about Her brow, thou who canst foreshadow the future and bring to light the buried past; thou who art Master of all the Magic, who practisest all the Arts, and who alone knowest the Form of the Isis, speak! Shall the only man in the land of Khem who has stood in the Presence Itself be confounded of an order from the Priest of the God of Thebes? Think ye of the time when those of thine Order sent message to their kings to die, and the kings obeyed! Are things so changed that Pharaoh shall now, for the asking, procure thy daughter and my love? Is there no alternative but that Lala shall seek the arms of Anubis rather than these of mine? Say but the words, and by the hour the Sun-God Ra first lights the eternal eyes of the Great Horemkhu, Lala shall be saved. Shall the cunning Pharaoh gratify his lust under the cloak of a sanctity which——?"

"Peace!" thundered the old man. "By Him who sleeps in Menlak, this thing shall not be! With the aid of the Isis will I save the girl; but for him who did consult the Oracle without true warrant do I tremble. Nay, I know it. Say naught, but pray fervently to the Holy Mother for the pardon She, most merciful, is ever ready to accord Her votaries who may even through their faith transgress Her laws. Come hither, my daughter. Dost thou, who hast sworn that rather than this matter of thy service thou wilt suffer death, possess the courage to assume its simulation? Nay, answer not hastily, thinking this latter be the lighter burden. Death itself is easy: one sharp prick, perchance, and, lo! to the righteous Anubis grants a royal oblation and a memorial in the Place of Eternity. But canst thou endure to be put away as dead whilst thou art really living—to be summoned back to thy life again only when events in their sequence shall permit? Canst thou endure to lie in the pit swathed and bandaged as an Osirian till thy lover awake thee?"

"An he wake me with a kiss, all these things will I endure."

"'Tis well. Thou art indeed my daughter. Speak to her, Koreb, comfort her till my return."

And the High Priest passed from the apartment leaving the lovers locked in each others' arms—Koreb eager and protesting; Lala tearful, but resolute to undergo the dark ordeal for her love's sake.

"For," she murmured, "I shall but sink asleep to wake in Heaven."

"Yet it were better we fled together now, and thus avoid thy wandering on the borders of Amenti, which assuredly hath a savour of sacrilege."

"Nay, nay, I divine my father's purpose. Were we to flee we should be outcast all the days of our lives The signet having gone forth, we should be pursued, and by reason of the pursuit be so made known throughout the River that life in the land would become impossible. Whereas if I be thought dead all remembrance of me will end in the pit at Syene yonder, and unadvertised, and consequently unknown, we may live together in peace far away in the Upper Country. My father considers all things. Place thy faith in the palms of his hands, Koreb, and rest assured the compassing of our happiness is his endeavour."

Then Rama-hotep returned, bearing a long rolled strip of linen about the breadth of two fingers, a small, sharp knife, some kneaded aromatic wax, and a phial which contained a bright, pellucid green liquid.

"My daughter," he said, handing her the linen roll, "I pray thee retire and swallow slowly, digit by digit, this strip of linen; when it is well nigh all swallowed draw it carefully back in order that it may absorb and bring away any humours which may be present in thy body, and which, being there, would ill assist the task I would perform Return here as speedily as thou may."

The girl knelt for one moment before Rama-hotep, then taking the linen roll swiftly left the chamber. Lala's faith in her father was unquestioning. Unreservedly she placed herself in his hands, her trust strengthened and refined in possessing it for her lover's sake. But Koreb, who was called upon to express a faith which made small demands upon his body compared with those it would exercise upon the frame of one so dear to him, was anxious and perplexed; and he asked in troubled accents what was Rama-hotep's aim and plan of execution.

"Doubter!" cried the High Priest. "Hast thou not, ere this, seen those I have thrown into a death-like sleep, and whose souls at my bidding have ranged afar, bringing me word, by the mechanically moving lips of the clay, of matters happening in all the five-and-forty Nomes of the Three Countries? Then it was the soul which was liberated for a time from its earthly shell; the body was still warm and animate, and yet ye believed! Why should ye doubt, therefore, the power of one who can free the soul when he purposes only to suspend the animation of the body? I would present Lala to those who come from Thebes, apparently dead—drowned in the River. As soon as they shall have been satisfied and have departed thou shalt see her restored as a living woman until such time as she must be thrown again into the same death-like state in order that she may be taken as a mummy to the pit which is sacred to those called to Amenti by way of the River Then, under instruction, it will be thy task to bring her back to life, and unknown, unsuspected, and forgotten, floating down the Nile, thou mayst, perchance, by passing Thebes in the darkness, gain life and happiness in the city of On."

And then the old man was silent, communing with his own thoughts, while Koreb stood wrestling with the keen emotions which filled his heart to overflowing, till Lala re-entered the chamber

"My father," she said simply, "I am here to do thy bidding"

Requesting her to compose herself upon the couch fashioned in the form of a

Tau, Rama-hotep rapidly plugged her ears and nostrils with pieces of the kneaded wax, thrust sufficiently far into the passages to be invisible to the ordinary observer. Enjoining her to hold her breath, he then with the sharp knife dexterously severed the string of her tongue. The blood gushed forth for an instant, till an application of the green liquid from the phial arrested the flow in a miraculous manner; and three or four more applications of the same powerful styptic had the effect of completely healing the wound. Koreb, unable to bear the sight, turned him to the wall and groaned; but the brave girl uttered no cry, neither did she flinch; and as her father carefully washed away all traces of the blood from her head and neck, she turned her face towards her lover and smiled. She was about to speak, but the old man, divining her intention, laid his finger on her lips and frowned. Placing a wedge between her teeth, he next anointed her tongue many times with the juice of the pellitory root mixed with butter; then, bidding her fold her arms upon her breast and make deep inspiration, while her head and lungs were yet fully charged with air, he skilfully rolled back her now loosened tongue so as to entirely seal all the passages leading from the throat, thereby completely retaining the air prisoned in the head. He held the tongue in this position for some moments, till Lala gradually closed her eyes. Then the tension of her frame became relaxed, the hues of life fast faded from her flesh, the temperature of her body grew slowly lower, and the beating of her heart grew indistinguishable

Then Rama-hotep withdrew his fingers and the wedge from her mouth, and tenderly closed the fast stiffening jaw. Lala lay as one bereft of life, perfect in her simulation of mortality. And Koreb, throwing himself by the side of the couch, cried out in his agony,—

"She is dead! she is dead! Anubis hath claimed her, and thou, her father, hast done this thing!"

III.

When the Sun-God created Himself anew next day grief ran riot on the island. The people put on black such as they wear during the first of the festival of Osiris, and the women beat their breasts and uttered their loud cries of lamentation; for Lala the beautiful, the daughter of the High Priest, and the beloved of all, was dead—found drowned, it was said, by her betrothed, hard by the water-gate of the Great Temple! She had been borne in his arms to the house of her father and placed upon the couch of death therein, where all who loved her might pass by the bier, testifying to her goodness and her charm. Beloved of the Gods, she had gone to Them in the pride of her youth and the full bloom of her beauty. May Anubis grant her royal oblation!

When the mission from Thebes heard of this, they sent to Rama-hotep inquiring as to its truth, and he returned answer,—

"The Gods are compassionate to those who fear Them, and the soul of my daughter hath attained the Fields of Peace."

And all those who had come from the city of Pharaoh entered the death-chamber, where the women crouched lamenting, and Rama-hotep stood at the head of the couch. And they passed by the body, examining it curiously. The chief among them laid his hand reverently upon the bare, crossed arms of the departed; but they were cold—cold as the grave.

Then he said,—

"O Rama-hotep, inasmuch as thy daughter, though now claimed by Anubis, was sacred to the will and service of the Unspeakable whose Temple is at Thebes, I doubt me but we should take her body to lay before the God, in order that He may know His servants have faithfully performed His hests as far as in them lay."

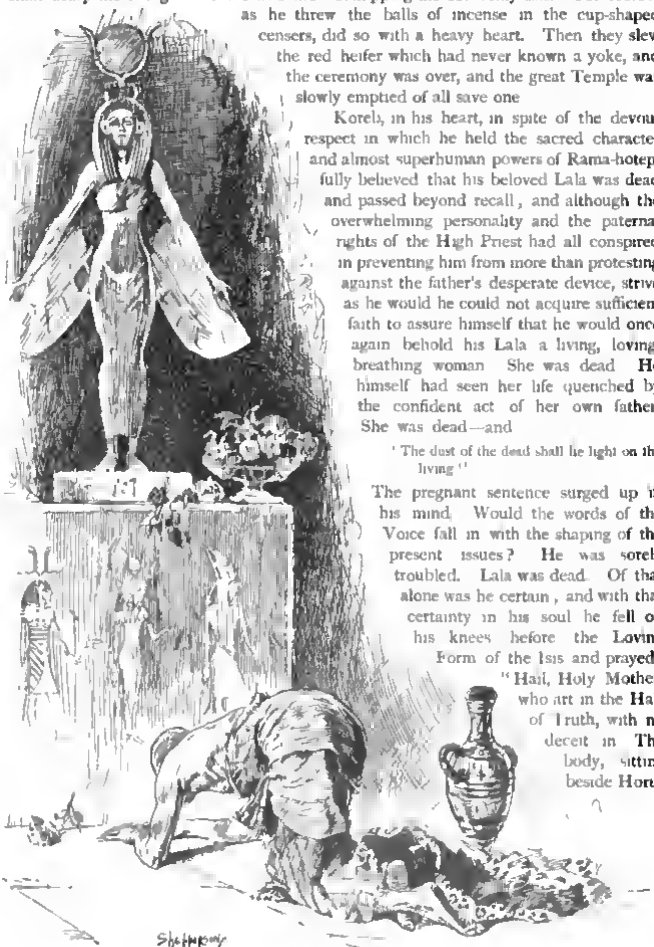
Koreb started at the words, but Rama-hotep gave no sign.

"Your God is great," he answered, "and He knoweth all things. Therefore will He know that, even as Osiris Himself was thrown into the Nile by His brother Set, so all of those who are called to Amenti by the road of the Holy River, are sacred in their remains to Him, Osiris, and to Him alone; that they are buried in the tombs which are set apart thereunto in Syene yonder, that they are embalmed of the priests themselves, and that the Book of the Dead which shall accompany them is inscribed and written by the High Priest only."

Then the Thebans lowered their heads and passed out, for they knew the words of Rama-hotep were true. And when the mission had departed, Koreb and Rama-hotep returned to the apartment wherein the body lay. Later on, it was borne into an inner chamber, and the word was given forth that, as this was the first occasion within the memory of any there present of death from drowning in the Holy River, the High Priest himself would perform the duties of embalming the sacred Osirian.

Now were all called away to the duty of the Worship, and of the Temple. The singers' voices rose as sweetly as ever in the Hymn of Praise, the tones of Rama-hotep

were as sonorous as ever in the Invocation, and the offerings were made with all the ancient fervour. Lala was dead, but Lala was a woman, and naught that is mortal shall usurp the thought of those who are worshipping the Heavenly Isis. Yet Koreb, as he threw the balls of incense in the cup-shaped censers, did so with a heavy heart. Then they slew the red heifer which had never known a yoke, and the ceremony was over, and the great Temple was slowly emptied of all save one



Koreb, in his heart, in spite of the devout respect in which he held the sacred character and almost superhuman powers of Rama-hotep, fully believed that his beloved Lala was dead and passed beyond recall, and although the overwhelming personality and the paternal rights of the High Priest had all conspired in preventing him from more than protesting against the father's desperate device, strive as he would he could not acquire sufficient faith to assure himself that he would once again behold his Lala a living, loving, breathing woman. She was dead. He himself had seen her life quenched by the confident act of her own father. She was dead—and

> 'The dust of the dead shall lie light on the living'

The pregnant sentence surged up in his mind. Would the words of the Voice fall in with the shaping of the present issues? He was sorely troubled. Lala was dead. Of that alone was he certain, and with that certainty in his soul he fell on his knees before the Loving Form of the Isis and prayed:

"Hail, Holy Mother, who art in the Hall of Truth, with no deceit in Thy body, sitting beside Horus

in His disk, save her from the Gods who devour the vitals on the day of the great judgment! Let the Osirian go, Thou knowest she is without fault, without sin, or crime, or evil. Do not do aught against her. She lived off truth, and made it most of her delight in doing what men say and the Gods wish. Do not accuse her before the Lord of the Mummies, because her mouth is pure, and her hands, and her heart."

He rose to his feet feeling calmer and more resigned. Then he turned to leave the Hall, and, behold! there stood Rama-hotep leaning on his cedar wand, watching him.

"So, Koreb, should a priest not pray of his own words, without quoting chapter from the Book of the Dead?"

"My father, I am unhinged. I prayed for her, and prayer is prayer when suppliants are sincere."

"Then follow me, and bring thy sincerity with thee."

So they passed into the inner chamber where Lala lay, beautiful as a recumbent statue, on the couch of death. The moonbeams floating in through the openings in the cornice fell right across her face, glorifying it.

And Rama-hotep spoke.

"Koreb, lay thy hands upon this flesh! It is cold—cold as death. Well, she is not dead, thou doubter. See here! Place thy palm upon her brow. Is that, too, cold?"

"By Horus, no! I feel it warm; slightly, 'tis true, but distinctly warm, and different far from these poor marble limbs. O my father, forgive me. I doubted, but now I believe. Haste, I pray thee, to restore her to that life which is so dear to me, and to release my beloved from this mockery of death."

"Patience, my son, and take heed—since it is my design to keep her hidden within the chambers during the time men will think her to be in the Natron—that thou art careful none suspect aught from thy conduct, for if the truth should come to Pharaoh

our college here would lose its lands and privileges as forfeit for my treason to the signet."

"But, my father, would it be possible to keep her, my beloved, in this trance for the space of seventy days? Would not vitality, in that time, either die out entirely or reassert itself by throwing off the mask of death which at present conceals it?"

"Seventy days!" echoed the High Priest. "Ay, and for seventy thousand years. Hark ye, Koreb. If secured from all external accident, Lala, in her present condition, would retain her being for all time—till the Gods shall pass from the land of Khem, which will be the breaking up of all things. Know then, the Place of Life is that portion of the spinal cord which hath junction with the under-surface of the brain, and the air which is now prisoned in Lala's head, so long as it escape not, will keep alive for ever the germ of vitality which is there seated. A faint spark, 'tis true, but ever ready to be fanned into that strange warmth which begets sensation."

Bidding Koreb heat some cakes of wheaten dough over a small charcoal brazier, Rama-hotep commenced to bathe Lala's limbs with warm water, gradually relaxing them from the state of rigidity which they had assumed, and then to work her arms regularly up and down, while Koreb kept applying the hot cakes to the crown of the girl's head. The wax stoppings were next removed, and the jaw being carefully forced open with the blade of a knife, the High Priest tenderly drew the tongue forward from the curved position in which it had closed the gullet. He then rubbed Lala's eyes with clarified butter until he succeeded in opening them, when they appeared quite glazed. More butter was now placed upon the tongue and allowed to run down the throat, another hot cake was applied to the head, and the artificial respiration resumed. In a short time the body of the girl was somewhat violently convulsed, the nostrils became inflated, and respiration ensuing, the limbs began to express their natural tint. Then the pupils of the eyes were dilated, and losing their glassiness, grew full of life and colour. The lips moved, and love's intuition interpreting their shaping into "Koreb!" with a glad cry he flung his arms about her neck, quickening her gathering life with the warmth of his passionate kisses.

IV.

During all that number of days which is necessary to the process of embalming did Lala remain concealed within the inner chambers of her father's house. Then again came the hour of sadness when Rama-hotep, after taking sorrowful farewell of his hapless child, once more caused her to endure that appearance of death which had already deceived the priests of Amen-Ra.

"My daughter," he cried, "may the Holy Mother guard and protect thee during the days thou art playing the part of the Osirian in the sacred tomb. Embrace thy father, whom thou art about to leave for ever, since when thy lover awake thee from thy sleep it will but precede thy sojourn in another city."

And Lala fell upon his neck, taking leave of him with many kisses and tearful embraces; then, holding out her hand to Koreb, she composed herself upon the couch, and folding her arms across her breast, she once again was gently put to sleep. Her father fondly kissed her brow for the last time on this earth before they swathed her in the linen bandages, and again, as one of high caste, wrapped her form in the cartonnage of plastered cloth. Then was the supposed mummy handed to those by whom the coverings are painted with the figure of Nut or Heaven, and with those of Isis and Nepthys, one on each side, with outstretched wings, to protect the dead. Thus enveloped and adorned was the body of the living Lala placed in the coffin of sycamore wood, together with the inscribed scarabæi and the copy of that Book, the

original of which was written by the divine Thoth himself. So the coffin was carried to the mummy boat, and with the hired mourners wailing and beating their breasts, it was rowed across the River, where the procession landed and toiled its doleful way to the tombs among the rocks

Thus was Lala buried; and in the days which followed Koreb applied himself to the preparation for the flight. Procuring a boat from some distant Nome, he furnished it, and by night concealed the craft among the reeds which thickly overgrew a choked-up canal. Then, when the time came, Koreb was ferried across the Nile, while Rama-hotep watched him sadly from the towers of the temple. Unobserved, the young priest proceeded to the hidden boat, from which he drew forth those things necessary to the first portion of his undertaking, together with a lamp and a rope-ladder. Swiftly he took his way across the intervening country till he reached the tombs which are hewn in the rocky bases of the low hills. Selecting the Mastaba sacred to the Osirian who might be drowned in the River, Koreb entered the outer chamber, where are

painted the figures of the Gods, and scenes descriptive of immortal life and the joys of the Fields of Peace. Opposite this he beheld a doorway over which was sculptured in the hieroglyphic character, "May Anubis who dwells within the divine house grant a royal oblation! May sepulture be granted in the nether world, in the land of the divine Menti, the great, the good, to those who are faithful to the great God." Passing through this doorway, Koreb found himself in a narrower chamber or corridor, where, at the farther end, he came upon the square opening of the deep pit, which fell a sheer sixty cubits down through the solid granite to the passage leading to the sarcophagus vault — the labour of these old-time workers, before whose genius Nature bowed her head. The smooth, hard floor of the chamber, and almost polished sides of the pit, afforded no means of making fast the rope-ladder; so Koreb hastened back into the open and tore off a large bough from a tamarisk tree which grew near. This he placed across the mouth of the pit, and affixing thereto his ladder, he kindled his lamp and rapidly descended. Following the narrow passage at the bottom, he quickly reached the sarcophagus chamber, where, in one corner, he beheld the coffin of his betrothed. With one bound he was across the vault and levering up the jealous lid. Once again he looked upon that beloved form, composed and rigid in its simulated death. But Koreb knew full well the life was here. He knew full well how the prisoned air would compel the soul to its tenement, even as the waxed and plastered linen would keep the body from decay. Fervently embracing the inanimate form, he cried, —

"O my beloved, let me breathe the breath of love into thy nostrils and with the warmth of my body cause the blood once more to leap within thy veins. Lala, I am here at thy side, about to strike off the chains of darkness which encompass thee. Doth not Hathor, the Loving Form of the Isis, bid thy heart awake to the lips of thy lover and kindle anew in his kisses? Is not the love which is within thee vigorous to burst thy bonds in its exultation? Thy father's fetters must be strong indeed to brook the urgings of a loving heart. But I have the key whereby I can unlock them. Lala, my beloved, I am here to release thee; and then love, life, happiness, in the City of the Sun!"

He tenderly and reverently then lifted the body from the coffin, and was about to loose the swathing previous to commencing the work of resuscitation, when he remembered that in his eager haste to descend he had left many of the things he would require at the mouth of the pit. Seizing his lamp, he made his way along the passage to where the rope-ladder hanging marked the ascent to the Upper Chambers. Placing his lamp down in the corner, he rapidly climbed to the top, and having arranged the various articles he sought carefully about him, again prepared to descend. Unhappily, he did not observe in his eagerness that the irregular strain produced by the two journeys he had already made had caused one end of the tamarisk bough to shift perilously near to the edge of the pit; in fact, by the time he commenced the second descent this end of the bough overlapped the pit's mouth by no more than half the length of his forearm. All unheeding, burning with desire to return to Lala, he had reached within a short distance of the bottom when the ladder suddenly gave way above him. He fell heavily the remaining way, while the tamarisk bough hurtling down the sides of the pit with an infernal din struck him senseless on the granite floor of the passage.

How long he lay there he knew not, but when he revived his lamp was still tranquilly burning where he had placed it in the corner. He dragged himself over to it. He felt terribly shaken and ill—he must have slipped and fallen—but he must throw it off, for Lala's sake. He rose up and raised the lamp. Gods of Heaven!

There, there, almost at his feet, lay the tangled coils of the ladder and the bough which had held it! He was entrapped, entombed, sixty cubits deep in the bowels of the earth; and Lala, his beloved Lala, was lost!

Then, under the shock, his power of concretion seemed suddenly to leave him. A wave of unutterable despair swept into his soul, flooding and extinguishing his very faculty of thought. He stood there, still holding aloft the lamp, motionless as the hewn figures in the Upper Chamber he was doomed never more to enter, as gradually the darkened recesses of his mind grew full of a strange light such as that in which the Holy Isis conveys Her Presence to the souls of Her adorers. Once again he was kneeling within the Sanctuary, praying, gazing at the niche where reposes the Symbol, and the Voice was borne fatefully upon his senses:—

"The dust of the dead shall be light on the living!"

He shuddered as the words in their awful significance broke in upon his mind, and the bonds which held back the blood from his heart were loosened, and the thought of Lala rushed in on the tumultuous tide. He flew to the side of the shaft. Hard and remorseless as destiny itself. Ten hundred thousand chisels would be worn away in cutting steps to the top, and he had but his sacrificial knife. As well attempt to hew rocks with a reed as ply that blade on the smooth, close granite; while a hundred years might pass ere men would come to bury another sacred Osirian in the vault.

With one cry of bitter anguish he turned away, accepting his doom with the sublime fatalism of his race and his religion. He passed into the chamber wherein lay Lala. Setting the lamp down by her head, dull despair smote him again as he gazed upon her sweet repose, peaceful and calm in the hope of a glad awaking. Then he wrestled with himself. Should he wake her? His whole soul was consumed with the desire to see her smile upon him once again, to feel her clinging arms about his neck, to taste her warm kisses once more upon his lips, and locked in her embrace, to wait for death. But she! should she, who was untroubled and at rest, be aroused to share the horrors which surrounded him? Could he choose to witness the look of anguish that would pass into those loving eyes when their dreadful doom should stand naked before her? Yet he could slay her and then himself, and the knife which touched her heart would reach his own. He could not die alone. He must awaken her that he might hear one word of comfort, love, and sympathy from the lips he loved so well; that they might mingle their accents in one last prayer to the Mighty Mother. He rose up to make the preparations, when the great selfishness of him smote his conscience hard. What was this thing he was about to do? No! no! So let him die alone and unsustained, and let him await in Amenti the coming of her in the fulness of time and the rolling up

of the Heavens—for what are the days of the earth to the immortality of the soul?

"O Holy Isis!" he implored, "Beloved of Osiris and Mother of Horus, the young Sun, forgive the sin I sinned, inasmuch as I suffer and am full of trouble and remorse. But I have not stolen, neither have I lied. I have not corrupted men or women, neither have I taken the things which are the Gods'. I have smitten no one secretly, neither have I slain the sacred animals. I have not defiled the River, nor spoken ill of any to his fellow. Therefore, I beseech Thee, extend Thy pardon to Thy servant who kneels before Thee in his abasement. Mayest Thou see fit, in Thine infinite mercy, to release the soul of my beloved gently, and may the fulness of Thy judgment arrive in Thy speedy pity, and may we attain together in the Fields of Peace the bliss we have forfeited on earth, O Thou who Wast, who Art, and who Wilt Be!"

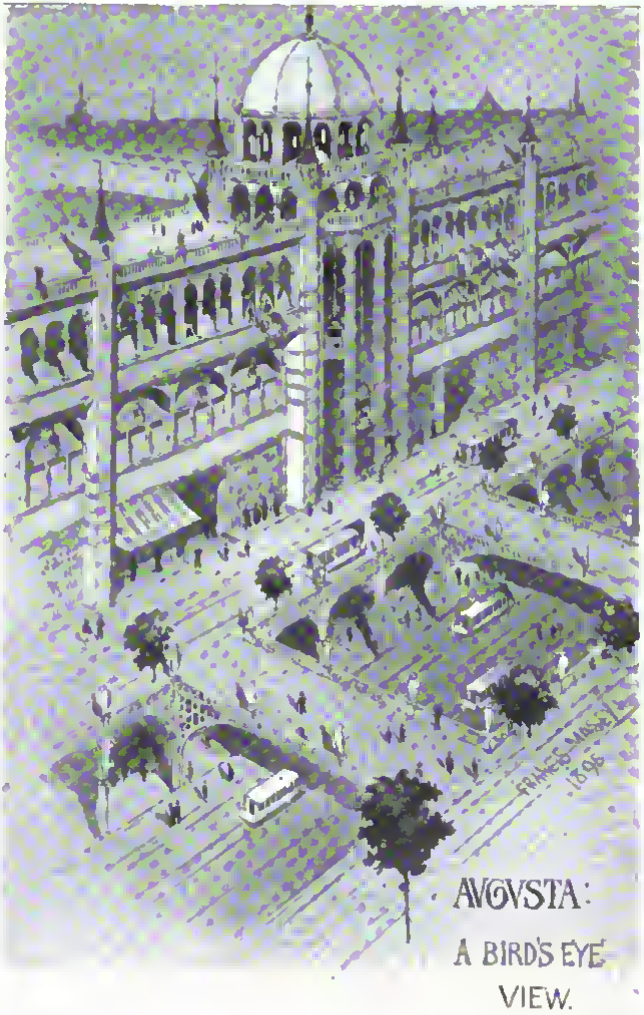
He rose up, imprinted one long, lingering kiss on Lala's brow, then plunged his knife deep into his heart. He reeled half round and fell across the body of his betrothed, while his life-blood, gushing forth, stained red the figures of the painted cartonnage.

* * * * * *

Three thousand times since then has Father Sihor risen on his couch, yet deep down in the buried rock tombs of Syene the dust of a dead man is lying lightly on the bosom of a still living woman!

CYRIL MULLETT.

GUESSES AT FUTURITY. NO. 8.
A DINNER PARTY A.D. 2000 MENU OF CHEMICAL FOODS.



GUESSES AT FUTURITY. NO. 9.
"A STREET IN THE CITY OF THE FUTURE."

"I have been here before,
But when, or how, I cannot tell!"
ROSSETTI

I.

TUESDAY NIGHT,
November 3rd.

THEORIES! What is the good of theories? They are the scourges that lash our minds in modern days, lash them into confusion, perplexity, despair. I have never been troubled by them before. Why should I be troubled by them now? And the absurdity of Professor Black's is surely obvious. A child would laugh at it. Yes, a child! I have never been a diary writer. I have never been able to understand the amusement of sitting down late at night and scrawling minutely in some hidden book every paltry incident of one's paltry days. People say it is so interesting to read the entries years afterwards. To read, as a man, the *menu* that I ate through as a boy, the love story that I was actor in, the tragedy that I brought about, the debt that I have never paid,—how could it profit me? To keep a diary has always seemed to me merely an addition to the ills of life. Yet now I have a hidden book, like the rest of the world, and I am scrawling in it to-day. Yes, but for a reason.

I want to make things clear to myself, and I find, as others, that my mind works more easily with the assistance of the pen. The actual tracing of words on paper dispels the clouds that cluster round my thoughts. I shall recall events to set my mind at ease, to prove to myself how absurd a man who could believe in Professor Black would be. "Little Dry-as-dust" I used to call him. Dry? He is full of wild romance, rubbish that a school-girl would be ashamed to believe in. Yet he is abnormally clever: his record proves that. Still, clever men are the first to be led astray, they say. It is the searcher who follows the wandering light. What he says can't be true. When I have filled these pages, and read what I have written dispassionately, as one of the outside public might read, I shall have done, once for all, with the ridiculous fancies that are beginning to make my life a burden. To put my thoughts in order will make a music. The evil spirit within me will sleep, will die. I shall be cured. It must be so—it shall be so.

To go back to the beginning. Ah! what a long time ago that seems! As a child I was cruel. Most boys are cruel, I think. My school companions were a merciless set—merciless to one another, to their masters when they had a chance, to animals, to birds. The desire to torture was in nearly all of them. They loved to bully, and if they bullied only mildly, it was from fear, not from love. They did not wish their boomerang to return and slay them. If a boy were deformed they twitted him. If a master were kind, or gentle, or shy, they made his life as intolerable as they could. If an animal or a bird came into their power they had no pity. I was like the rest. Indeed, I think that I was worse. Cruelty is horrible. I have enough imagination to do more than know that—to feel it.

Some say that it is lack of imagination which makes men and women brutes. May it not be power of imagination? The interest of torturing is lessened, is almost lost, if we cannot be the tortured as well as the torturer.

As a child I was cruel by nature, by instinct. I was a handsome, well-bred, gentlemanlike, gentle-looking little brute. My parents adored me, and I was good to them. They were so kind to me that I was almost fond of them. Why not? It seemed to me as politic to be fond of them as of any one else. I did what I pleased, but I did not always let them know it; so I pleased them. The wise child will take care to foster the ignorance of its parents. My people were pretty well off, and I was their only child, but my chief chances of future pleasure in life were centred in my grandmother, my mother's mother. She was immensely rich, and she lived here. This room in which I am writing now was her favourite sitting-room. On that hearth, before a log fire, such as is burning at this moment, used to sit that wonderful cat of hers—that horrible cat! Why did I ever play my childish cards to win this house, this place? Sometimes, lately—very lately only—I have wondered, like a fool perhaps. Yet would Professor Black say so? I remember, as a boy of sixteen, paying my last visit here to my grandmother. It bored me very much to come. But she was said to be near death, and death leaves great houses vacant for others to fill. So when my mother said that I had better come, and my father added that he thought my grandmother was fonder of me than of my other relations, I gave up all my boyish plans for the holidays with apparent willingness. Though almost a child, I was not short-sighted. I knew every boy had a future as well as a present. I gave up my plans and came here with a smile, but in my heart I hated my grandmother for having power, and so bending me to relinquish pleasure for boredom. I hated her, and I came to her and kissed her, and saw her beautiful white Persian cat sitting before the fire in this room, and thought of the fellow who was my bosom friend, and with whom I longed to be, shooting, or fishing, or riding. And I

looked at the cat again. I remember it began to purr when I went near to it. It sat quite still, with its blue eyes fixed upon the fire, but when I approached it I heard it purr complacently. I longed to kick it. The limitations of its ridiculous life satisfied it completely. It seemed to reproduce in an absurd, diminished way, my grandmother, in her white lace cap, with her white face and hands. She sat in her chair all day and looked at the fire. The cat sat on the hearthrug and did the same. The cat seemed to me the animal personification of the human who kept me chained from all the sports and pleasures I had promised myself for the holidays. When I went near to the cat and heard it calmly purring at me I longed to do it an injury. It seemed to me as if it understood what my grandmother did not, and was complacently triumphing at my voluntary imprisonment with age, and laughing to itself at the pains men—and boys—will undergo for the sake of money. Brute! I did not love my grandmother, and she had money. I hated the cat utterly. It hadn't a *sou*!

This beautiful house is not old. My grandfather built it himself. He had no love for the life of towns, I believe, but was passionately in touch with nature, and, when a young man, he set out on a strange tour through England. His object was to find a perfect view, and in front of that view he intended to build himself a habitation. For nearly a year, so I have been told, he wandered through Scotland and England, and at last he came to this place in Cumberland, to this village, to this very spot. Here his wanderings ceased. Standing on the terrace—then uncultivated forest—that runs in front of these windows, he found at last what he desired. He bought the forest. He bought the windings of the river, the fields upon its banks, and on the extreme edge of the steep gorge through which it runs he built the lovely dwelling that to-day is mine.

This place is no ordinary place. It is characteristic in the highest degree. The house is wonderfully situated, with the ground falling abruptly in front of it, the river forming almost a horseshoe round it. The woods are lovely. The garden, curiously, almost wildly laid out, is like no other garden I ever saw. And the house, though not old, is full of little surprises, curiously-shaped rooms, remarkable staircases, quaint recesses. The place is a place to remember. The house is a house to fix itself in the memory. Nothing that had once lived here could ever come back and forget that it had been here. Not even an animal,—not even an animal!

I wish I had never gone to that dinner party and met the Professor. There was a horror coming upon me then. He has hastened its steps. He has put my fears into shape, my vague wondering into words. Why cannot men leave life alone? Why will they catch it by the throat and wring its secrets from it? To respect reserve is one of the first instincts of the gentleman; and life is full of reserve.

It is getting very late. I thought I heard a step in the house just now. I wonder—I wonder if *she* is asleep. I wish I knew.

Day after day passed by. My grandmother seemed to be failing, but almost imperceptibly. She evidently loved to have me near to her. Like most old dying people, in her mind she frantically clutched at life, that could give to her nothing more, and I believe she grew to regard me as the personification of all that was leaving her. My vitality warmed her. She extended her hands to my flaming hearthfire. She seemed trying to live in my life, and at length became afraid to let me out of her sight. One day she said to me, in her quavering, ugly voice,—old voices are so ugly, like hideous echoes,—

"Ronald, I could never die while you were in the room. So long as you are with me, where I can touch you, I shall live."

"'Ronald, I could never die while you were in the room.'"

And she put out her white, corrugated hand, and fondled my warm boy's hand.

How I longed to push her hand away, and get out into the sunlight and the air, and hear young voices, the voices of the morning, not of the twilight, and be away from wrinkled Death, that seemed sitting on the doorstep of that house huddled up like a beggar, waiting for the door to be opened!

I was bored till I grew malignant. I confess it. And, feeling malignant, I

began to long more and more passionately to vent myself on some one or something I looked at the cat, which, as usual, was sitting before the fire.

Animals have intuitions as keen as those of a woman, keener than those of a man. They inherit an instinct of fear of those who hate them from a long line of ancestors who have suffered at the hands of cruel men. They can tell by a look, by a motion, by the tone of a voice, whether to expect from any one kindness or malignity. The cat had purred complacently on the first day of my arrival, and had hunched up her white, furry back towards my hand, and had smiled with her calm, light blue eyes. Now, when I approached her, she seemed to gather herself together and to make herself small. She shrank from me. There was—as I fancied—a dawning comprehension, a dawning terror in her blue eyes. She always sat very close to my grandmother now, as if she sought protection, and she watched me as if she were watching for an intention which she apprehended to grow in my mind.

And the intention came.

For, as the days went on, and my grandmother still lived, I began to grow desperate. My holiday time was over now, but my parents wrote telling me to stay where I was, and not to think of returning to school. My grandmother had caused a letter to be sent to them in which she said that she could not part from me, and added that my parents would never have cause to regret interrupting my education for a time. "He will be paid in full for every moment he loses," she wrote, referring to me.

It seemed a strange taste in her to care so much for a boy, but she had never loved women, and I was handsome, and she liked handsome faces. The brutality in my nature was not written upon my features. I had smiling, frank brown eyes, a lithe young figure, a gay boy's voice. My movements were quick, and I have always been told that my gestures were never awkward, my demeanour was never unfinished, as is the case so often with lads at school. Outwardly I was attractive; and the old woman, who had married two husbands merely for their looks, delighted in feeling that she had the power to retain me by her side at an age when most boys avoid old people as if they were the pestilence.

And then I pretended to love her, and obeyed all her insufferably tiresome behests. But I longed to wreak vengeance upon her all the same. My dearest friend, the fellow with whom I was to have spent my holidays, was leaving at the end of this term which I was missing. He wrote to me furious letters, urging me to come back, and reproaching me for my selfishness and lack of affection.

Each time I received one I looked at the cat, and the cat shrank nearer to my grandmother's chair.

It never purred now, and nothing would induce it to leave the room where she sat. One day the servant said to me,—

"I believe the poor dumb thing knows my mistress can't last very much longer, sir. The way that cat looks up at her goes to my heart. Ah! them beasts understand things as well as we do, I believe."

I think the cat understood quite well. It did watch my grandmother in a very strange way, gazing up into her face, as if to mark the changing contours, the increasing lines, the down-droop of the features, that bespoke the gradual soft approach of death. It listened to the sound of her voice; and as, each day, the voice grew more vague, more weak and toneless, an anxiety that made me exult dawned and deepened in its blue eyes. Or so I thought.

I had a great deal of morbid imagination at that age, and loved to weave a web of fancies, mostly horrible, around almost everything that entered into my life. It

pleased me to believe that the cat understood each new intention that came into my mind, read me silently from its place near the fire, tracked my thoughts, and was terror-stricken as they concentrated themselves round a definite resolve, which hardened and toughened day by day.

It pleased me to believe, do I say? I did really believe, and do believe now, that the cat understood all, and grew haggard with fear as my grandmother failed visibly. For it knew what the end would mean for it.

That first day of my arrival, when I saw my grandmother in her white cap, with her white face and hands, and the big white cat sitting near to her, I had thought there was a similarity between them. That similarity struck me more forcibly, grew upon me, as my time in the house grew longer, until the latter seemed almost a reproduction of the former, and after each letter from my friend my hate for the two increased. But my hate for my grandmother was impotent, and would always be so. I could never repay her for the *ennui*, the furious, forced inactivity which made my life a burden, and spurred my bad passions while they lulled me in a terrible, enforced repose. I could repay her favourite, the thing she had always cherished, her feline confidant, who lived in safety under the shadow of her protection. I could wreak my fury on that when the protection was withdrawn, as it must be at last. It seemed to my brutal, imaginative, unfinished boy's mind that the murder of her pet must hurt and wound my grandmother even after she was dead. I would make her suffer then, when she was impotent to wreak a vengeance upon me. I would kill the cat.

The creature knew my resolve the day I made it, and had even, I should say, anticipated it.

As I sat day after day beside my grandmother's armchair in the dim room, with the blinds drawn to shut out the summer sunlight, and talked to her in a subdued and reverent voice, agreeing with all the old banalities she uttered, all the preposterous opinions she propounded, all the commands she laid upon me, I gazed beyond her at the cat, and the creature was haggard with apprehension.

It knew, as I knew, that its day was coming. Sometimes I bent down and took it up on my lap to please my grandmother, and praised its beauty and its gentleness to her. And all the time I felt its warm, furry body trembling with horror between my hands. This pleased me, and I pretended that I was never happy unless it was on my knees. I kept it there for hours, stroking it so tenderly, smoothing its thick white coat, which was always in the most perfect order, talking to it, caressing it.

And sometimes I took its head between my two hands, turned its face to mine, and stared into its large blue eyes. Then I could read all its agony, all its torture of apprehension, and in spite of my friend's letters, and the dulness of my days, I was almost happy.

The summer was deepening, the glow of the roses flushed the garden ways, the skies were clear above Scawfell, when the end at last drew near. My grandmother's face was now scarcely recognisable. The eyes were sunk deep in her head. All expression seemed to fade gradually away. Her cheeks were no longer fine ivory white: a dull, sickening, yellow pallor overspread them. She seldom looked at me now, but rested entombed in her great armchair, her shrunken limbs seeming to tend downwards, as if she were inclined to slide to the floor and die there. Her lips were thin and dry, and moved perpetually in a silent chattering, as if her mind were talking and her voice were already dead. The tide of life was retreating from her body. I could almost see it visibly ebb away. The falling waves made no sound upon the shore. Death is uncanny, like all silent things.

Her maid wished her to stay entirely in bed, but she would get up, muttering that she was well; and the doctor said it was useless to hinder her. She had no specific disease. Only the years were taking their last toll of her. So she was placed in her chair each day by the fire, and sat there till evening, muttering with those dry lips. The stiff folds of her silken skirts formed an angle, and there the cat crouched hour after hour, a silent, white, waiting thing.

And the waves ebbed and ebbed away, and I waited too.

One afternoon, as I sat by my grandmother, the servant entered with a letter for me just arrived by the post. I took it up. It was from Willoughby, my school-friend. He said the term was over, that he had left school, and his father had decided to send him out to America to start in business in New York, instead of entering him at Oxford as he had hoped. He bade me good-bye, and said he supposed we should not meet again for years; "but," he added, "no doubt you won't care a straw, so long as you get the confounded money you're after. You've taught me one of the lessons of life, young Ronald,—never to believe in friendship."

As I read the letter I set my teeth. All that was good in my nature centred round Willoughby. He was a really fine fellow. I honestly and truly loved him. His news gave me a bitter shock, and turned my heart to iron and to fire. Perhaps I should never see him again; even if I did, time would have changed him, seared him,—my friend, in his wonderful youth, with the morning in his eyes, would be no more. I hated myself in that moment for having stayed; I hated still more her who had kept me. For the moment I was carried out of myself. I crushed the letter up in my burning hand. I turned fiercely round upon that yellow, enigmatic, dying figure in the great chair. All the fury, locked within my heart for so long, rose to the surface, and drove self-interest away. I turned upon my grandmother with blazing eyes and trembling limbs. I opened my mouth to utter a torrent of reproachful words, when—what was it?—what slight change had stolen into the wrinkled, yellow face? I bent over her. The eyes gazed at me, but so horribly! She sat so low in her chair; she looked so fearful, so very strange! I put my fingers on her eyelids,—I drew them down over the eyeballs: they did not open again. I felt her bony hands: they were ice. Then I knew, and I felt myself smiling. I leaned over the dead woman. There, on the far side of her, crouched the cat. Its white fur was all bristling; its blue eyes were dilated; on its jaws there were flecks of foam.

I leaned over the dead woman and took it in my arms.

* * * * * * *

That was nearly twenty years ago, and yet to-night the memory of that moment, and what followed it, bring a fear to my heart which I must combat. I have read of men who lived for long spaces of time haunted by demons created by their imagination, and I have laughed at them and pitied them. Surely I am not going to join in their folly, in their madness, led to the gates of terror by my own fancies, half confirmed, apparently, by the chance utterances of a conceited Professor—a man of fads although a man of science.

That was twenty years ago. After to-night let me forget it. After to-night, do I say? Hark! the birds are twittering in the dew outside. The pale, early sun-shafts strike over the moors. And I am tired. To-morrow night I will finish this wrestle with my own folly; I will give the *coup de grâce* to my imagination. But no more now. My brain is not calm, and I will not write in excitement.

"I crushed the letter up."

II

WEDNESDAY NIGHT,
November 4th.

MARGOT has gone to bed at last, and I am alone. This has been a horrible day—horrible, but I will not dwell upon it.

After the death of my grandmother I went back to school again. But Willoughby was gone, and he could not forgive me. He wrote to me once or twice from New York, and then I ceased to hear from him. He died out of my life. His affection for me had evidently declined from the day when he took it into his head that I was only a money-grubber, like the rest of the world, and that the Jew instinct had developed in me at an abnormally early age. I let him go. What did it matter? But I was always glad that I had been cruel on the day my grandmother died. I never repented of what I did—never. If I had, I might be happier now.

I went back to school. I studied, played, got into mischief and out of it again, like other boys, but in my life there seemed to be an eternal coldness, that I alone, perhaps, was conscious of. My deed of cruelty, of brutal revenge on the thing that had never done me injury, had seared my soul. I was not sorry, but I could not forget; and sometimes I thought—how ridiculous it looks written down!—that there was a power hidden somewhere which could not forget either, and that a penalty might have to be paid. Because a creature is dumb, must its soul die when it dies? Is not the soul, perhaps—as *he* said—a wanderer through many bodies?

But if I did not kill a soul, as I killed a body, the day my grandmother died, where is that soul now? That is what I want to arrive at,—that is what I must arrive at, if I am to be happy.

I went back to school, and I passed to Oxford. I tasted the strange, unique life of a university, narrow, yet pulsating, where the youth, that is so green and springing, tries to arm itself for the battle with the weapons forged by the dead and sharpened by the more elderly among the living. I did well there, and I passed on into the world. And then at last I began to understand the value of my inheritance; for all that had been my grandmother's was now mine. My people wished me to marry, but I had no desire to fetter myself. So I took the sponge in my strong young hands, and tried to squeeze it dry. And I did not know that I was sad,—I did not know it until, at the age of thirty three, just seventeen years after my grandmother died, I understood the sort of thing happiness is. Of course it was love that brought to me understanding. I need not explain that. I had often played on love; now love began to play on me. I trembled at the harmonics his hands evoked.

I met a young girl, very young, just on the verge of life and of womanhood. She was seventeen when I first saw her, and she was valsing at a big ball in London,—her first ball. She passed me in the crowd of dancers, and I noticed her. As she was a *débutante*, her dress was naturally snow-white. There was no touch of colour about it—not a flower, not a jewel. Her hair was the palest yellow I had almost ever seen—the colour of an early primrose. Naturally fluffy, it nearly concealed the white riband that ran through it, and clustered in tendrils and tiny natural curls upon her neck. Her skin was whiter than ivory—a clear, luminous white. Her eyes were very large, and china-blue in colour.

This young girl dancing passed and repassed me, and my glance rested on her idly, even cynically. For she seemed so happy, and at that time happiness won

my languid wonder, if ingenuously exhibited. To be happy seemed almost to be mindless. But by degrees I found myself watching this girl, and more closely. Another dance began. She joined it with another partner. But she seemed just as pleased with him as with her former one. She would not let him pause to rest; she kept him dancing all the time,—her youth and freshness spoken in that gentle compelling. I grew interested in her, even acutely so. She seemed to me like the spirit of youth dancing over the body of Time. I resolved to know her. I felt weary: I thought she might revive me. The dance drew to an end, and I approached my hostess, pointed the girl out, and asked for an introduction. Her name was Margot Magendie, I found, and she was an heiress as well as a beauty.

I did not care: it was her humanity that drew me, nothing else.

But, strange to say, when the moment for the introduction arrived, and I stood face to face with Miss Magendie, I felt an extraordinary shrinking from her. I have never been able to understand it, but my blood ran cold, and my pulses almost ceased to beat. I would have avoided her: an instinct within me seemed suddenly to cry out against her. But it was too late: the introduction was effected; her hand rested on my arm.

I was actually trembling. She did not appear to notice it. The band played a valse, and the inexplicable horror that had seized me lost itself in the gay music. It never returned until lately.

I seldom enjoyed a valse more. Our steps suited so perfectly, and her obvious childish pleasure communicated itself to me. The spirit of youth in her knocked on my rather jaded heart, and I opened to it. That was beautiful and strange. I talked with her, and I felt myself younger, ingenuous rather than cynical, inclined even to a radiant—though foolish—optimism. She was very natural, very imperfect in worldly education, full of fragmentary but decisive views on life, quite unabashed in giving them forth, quite inconsiderate in summoning my adherence to them.

And then, presently, as we sat in a dim corridor under a rosy hanging lamp, in saying something she looked, with her great blue eyes, right into my face. Some very faint recollection awoke and stirred in my mind.

"Surely," I said hesitatingly, "surely I have seen you before? It seems to me that I remember your eyes."

As I spoke I was thinking hard, chasing the vagrant recollection that eluded me.

She smiled. "You don't remember my face?"

"No, not at all."

"Nor I yours. If we had seen each other surely we should recollect it."

Then she blushed, suddenly realising that her words implied, perhaps, more than she had meant. I did not pay the obvious compliment. Those blue eyes and something in their expression moved me strangely, but I could not tell why. When I said good-bye to her that night I asked to be allowed to call.

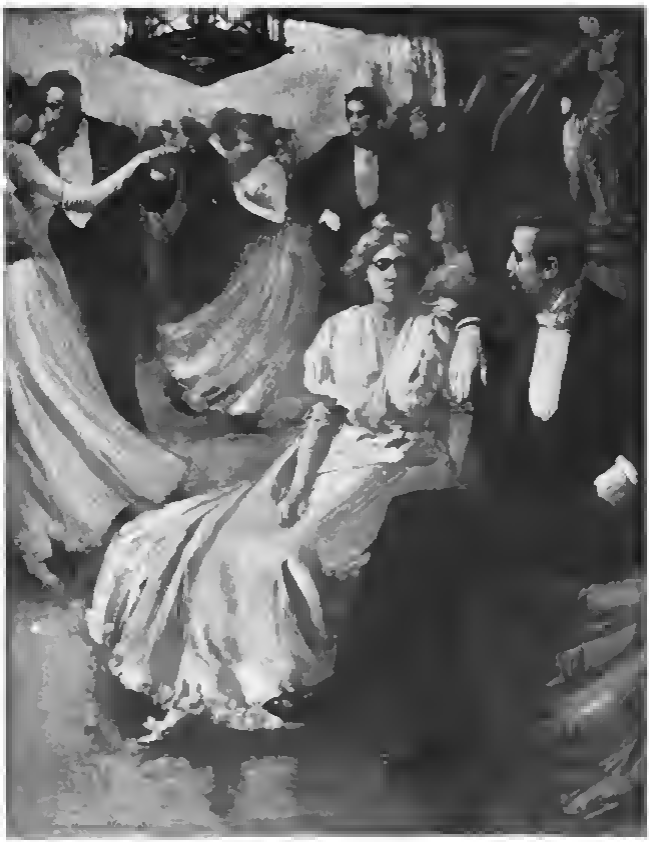
She assented.

That was the beginning of a very beautiful courtship, which gave a colour to life, a music to existence, a meaning to every slightest sensation.

And was it love that laid to sleep recollection, that sang a lullaby to awakening horror, and strewed poppies over it till it sighed itself into slumber? Was it love that drowned my mind in deep and charmed waters, binding the strange powers that every mind possesses in flowery garlands stronger than any fetters of iron? Was it love that, calling up dreams, alienated my thoughts from their search after reality?

I hardly know. I only know that I grew to love Margot, and only looked for love in her blue eyes, not for any deed of the past that might be mirrored there.

And I made her love me.



"As we sat in a dim corridor."

She gave her child's heart to my keeping with a perfect confidence that only a perfect affection could engender. She did love me then. No circumstances of to-day can break that fact under their hammers. She did love me, and it is the knowledge that she did which gives so much of fear to me now.

For great changes in the human mind are terrible. As we realise them we realise the limitless possibilities of sinister deeds that lie hidden in every human being. A little child that loves a doll can become an old, crafty, secret murderer. How horrible!

And perhaps it is still more horrible to think that, while the human envelope remains totally unchanged, every word of the letter within may become altered, and a message of peace fade into a sentence of death.

Margot's face is the same face now as it was when I married her—scarcely older, certainly not less beautiful. Only the expression of the eyes has changed.

For we were married. After a year of love-making, which never tired either of us, we elected to bind ourselves, to fuse the two into one.

We went abroad for the honeymoon, and, instead of shortening it to the fashionable fortnight, we travelled for nearly six months, and were happy all the time

Boredom never set in. Margot had a beautiful mind as well as a beautiful face. She softened me through my affection. The current of my life began to set in a different direction. I turned the pages of a book of pity and of death more beautiful than that of Pierre Loti. I could hear at last the great cry for sympathy, which is the music of this strange suffering world, and, listening to it, in my heart there rang an echo The cruelty in my nature seemed to shrivel up. I was more gentle than I had been, more gentle than I had thought I could ever be.

At last, in the late spring, we started for home We stayed for a week in London, and then we travelled north. Margot had never seen her future home, had never even been in Cumberland before. She was full of excitement and happiness, a veritable child in the ready and ardent expression of her feelings. The station is several miles from the house, and is on the edge of the sea. When the train pulled up at the wayside platform the day drew towards sunset, and the flat levels of the beach shone with a rich, liquid, amber light. In the distance the sea was tossing and tumbling, whipped into foam by a fresh wind. The Isle of Man lay far away, dark, mysterious, under a stack of bellying white clouds, just beginning to be tinged with the faintest rose

Margot found the scene beautiful, the wind life-giving, the flat sand-banks, the shining levels, even the dry, spiky grass that fluttered in the breeze, fascinating and refreshing.

"I feel near the heart of nature in a place like this," she said, looking up at a seagull that hovered over the little platform, crying to the wind on which it hung

The train stole off along the edge of the sands, till we could see only the white streamer of its smoke trailing towards the sun. We turned away from the sea, got into the carriage that was waiting for us, and set our faces inland The ocean was blotted out by the low grass and heather-covered banks that divided the fields Presently we plunged into woods. The road descended sharply. A village, an abruptly winding river, sprang into sight.

We were on my land. We passed the inn, the Rainwood Arms, named after my grandfather's family. The people whom we met stared curiously and saluted in rustic fashion.

Margot was full of excitement and pleasure, and talked incessantly, holding my hand tightly in hers and asking a thousand questions. Passing through the village, we mounted a hill towards a thick grove of trees.

"The house stands among them," I said, pointing

She sprang up eagerly in the carriage to find it, but it was hidden

We dashed through the gate into the momentary darkness of the drive, emerged between great green lawns, and drew up before the big doorway of the hall I looked into her eyes and said, "Welcome!"

She only smiled in answer

I would not let her enter the house immediately, but made her come with me to the terrace above the river, to see the view over the Cumbrian mountains and the moors of Eskdale.

The sky was very clear and pale, but over Styhead the clouds were boiling up The Screes that guard ebon Wastwater looked grim and sad.

Margot stood beside me on the terrace, but her chatter had been succeeded by silence. And I too was silent for the moment, absorbed in contemplation But presently I turned to her, wishing to see how she was impressed by her new domain.

She was not looking towards the river and the hills, but at the terrace walk itself, the band of emerald turf that bordered it, the stone pots full of flowers, the winding way that led into the shrubbery.

She was looking at these intently, and with a strangely puzzled, almost startled expression.

"Hush! Don't speak to me for a moment," she said, as I opened my lips "Don't · I want to—— How odd this is!"

And she gazed up at the windows of the house, at the creepers that climbed its walls, at the sloping roof and the irregular chimney-stacks.

Her lips were slightly parted, and her eyes were full of an inward expression that told me she was struggling with forgetfulness and desired recollection.

I was silent, wondering

At last she said, "Ronald, I have never been in the north of England before, never set foot in Cumberland; yet I seem to know this terrace walk, those very flower-pots, the garden, the look of that roof, those chimneys, even the slanting way in which that great creeper climbs. Is it not—is it not very strange?"

She gazed up at me, and in her blue eyes there was an expression almost of fear

I smiled down on her "It must be your fancy," I said.

"It does not seem so," she replied. "I feel as if I had been here before, and often, or for a long time." She paused; then she said, "Do let me go into the house. There ought to be a room there—a room—I seem almost to see it. Come! Let us go in."

She took my hand and drew me towards the hall door. The servants were carrying in the luggage, and there was a certain amount of confusion and noise, but she did not seem to notice it. She was intent on something: I could not tell what

"Do show me the house, Ronald—the drawing-room, and—and—there is another room I wish to see"

"You shall see them all, dear,' I said. "You are excited. It is natural enough. This is the drawing-room."

She glanced round it hastily

"And now the others!" she exclaimed.

I took her to the dining-room, the library, and the various apartments on the ground floor.

She scarcely looked at them. When we had finished exploring, "Are these all?" she asked, with a wavering accent of disappointment.

"All," I answered

"Then—show me the rooms upstairs."

We ascended the shallow oak steps, and passed first into the apartment in which my grandmother had died

It had been done up since then, refurnished, and almost completely altered. Only the wide fireplace, with its brass dogs and its heavy oaken mantelpiece, had been left untouched.

Margot glanced hastily round. Then she walked up to the fireplace, and drew a long breath

"There ought to be a fire here," she said

"But it is summer," I answered, wondering.

"Ronald, I don't think I like this room. There is something—I don't know—"

"And a chair there," she went on, in a curious low voice, indicating—I think now, or is it my imagination?—the very spot where my grandmother was wont to sit. "Yes—I seem to remember, and yet not to remember."

She looked at me, and her white brows were knit.

Suddenly she said: "Ronald, I don't think I like this room. There is something—I don't know—I don't think I could sit here"; and I seem to remember—something about it, as I did about the terrace. What can it mean?"

"It means that you are tired and over-excited, darling. Your nerves are too highly strung, and nerves play us strange tricks. Come to your own room and take off your things, and when you have had some tea you will be all right again.

Yes, I was fool enough to believe that tea was the panacea for an undreamed-of, a then unimaginable, evil.

I thought Margot was simply an overtired and imaginative child that evening. If I could believe so now!

We went up into her boudoir and had tea, and she grew more like herself, but several times that night I observed her looking puzzled and thoughtful, and a certain expression of anxiety shone in her blue eyes that was new to them then.

But I thought nothing of it, and I was happy. Two or three days passed, and Margot did not again refer to her curious sensation of pre-knowledge of the house and garden. I fancied there was a slight alteration in her manner; that was all. She seemed a little restless. Her vivacity flagged now and then. She was more willing to be alone than she had been. But we were old married folk now, and could not be always in each other's sight. I had a great many people connected with the estate to see, and had to gather up the tangled threads of many affairs.

The honeymoon was over. Of course we could not always be together.

Still I should have wished Margot to desire it, and I could not hide from myself that now and then she scarcely concealed a slight impatience to be left in solitude. This troubled me, but only a little, for she was generally as fond as ever. That evening, however, an incident occurred which rendered me decidedly uneasy, and made me wonder if my wife were not inclined to that curse of highly strung women—hysteria!

I had been out riding over the moors, to visit a tenant farmer who lived at some distance, and did not return until twilight. Dismounting, I let myself into the house, traversed the hall and ascended the stairs. As I wore spurs, and the steps were of polished oak and uncarpeted, I walked noisily enough to warn any one of my approach. I was passing the door of the room that had been my grandmother's sitting-room, when I noticed that it stood open. It was rather dark, and the interior was dim enough, but I could see a figure in a white dress moving about inside. I recognised Margot and wondered what she was doing, but her movements were so singular that instead of speaking to her I stood in the doorway and watched her.

She was walking, with a very peculiar, stealthy step, around the room, not as if she were looking for anything, but merely as if she were restless or ill at ease. But what struck me forcibly was this, that there was something curiously animal in her movements, seen thus in a dim half light that only partially revealed her to me. I had never seen a woman walk in that strangely wild, yet soft, way before. There was something uncanny about it, that rendered me extremely discomforted; yet I was quite fascinated, and rooted to the ground.

I cannot tell how long I stood there. I was so completely absorbed in the passion of the gazer that the passage of time did not concern me in the least. I was as one assisting at a strange spectacle. This white thing moving in the dark did not suggest my wife to me, although it was she. I might have been watching an animal, vague yet purposeful of mind, tracing out some hidden thing, following out some instinct quite foreign to humanity. I remember that presently I involuntarily clasped my hands together, and felt that they were very cold. Perspiration broke out on my face. I was painfully, unnaturally moved, and a violent desire to be away from this white moving thing came over me. Walking as softly as I could, I went to my dressing-room, shut the door, and sat down on a chair. I never

"She had told me a lie

remember to have felt thoroughly unnerved before, but now I found myself actually shaken, palsied. I could understand how deadly a thing fear is. I lit a candle hastily, and as I did so a knock came to the door.

Margot's voice said, "May I come in?"

I felt unable to reply, so I got up and admitted her.

She entered smiling, and looking such a child, so innocent, so tender, that I almost laughed aloud. That I, a man, should have been frightened by a child in a white dress, just because the twilight cast a phantom atmosphere around her! I held her in my arms and I gazed into her blue eyes.

She looked down, but still smiled.

"Where have you been, and what have you been doing?" I asked gaily.

She answered that she had been in the drawing-room since tea-time.

"You came here straight from the drawing-room?" I said.

She replied, "Yes."

Then, with an indifferent air which hid real anxiety, I said, "By the way, Margot, have you been into that room again? The room you fancied you recollected?"

"No, never," she answered, withdrawing herself from my arms. "I don't wish to go there. Make haste, Ronald, and dress. It is nearly dinner-time, and I am ready." And she turned and left me.

She had told me a lie. All my feelings of uneasiness and discomfort returned tenfold.

That evening was the most wretched one, the only wretched one, I had ever spent with her.

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I am tired of writing. I will continue my task to-morrow. It takes me longer than I anticipated. Yet even to tell everything to myself brings me some comfort. Man must express himself; and despair must find a voice.

III

THURSDAY NIGHT,
November 5th.

THAT he awoke in me suspicion of the child I had married. I began to doubt her, yet never ceased to love her. She had all my heart, and must have it till the end. But the calm of love was to be succeeded by love's tumult and agony. A strangeness was creeping over Margot. It was as if she took a thin veil in her hands, and drew it over and all around her, till the outlines I had known were slightly blurred. Her disposition, which had been so clear cut, so sharply, beautifully defined, standing out in its innocent glory for all men to see, seemed to withdraw itself, as if a dawning necessity for secrecy had arisen. A thin crust of reserve began to subtly overspread her every act and expression. She thought now before she spoke; she thought before she looked. It seemed to me that she was becoming a slightly different person.

The change I mean to imply is very difficult to describe. It was not abrupt enough to startle, but I could feel it, slight though it was. Have you seen the first flat film of waveless water, sent by the incoming tides of the sea, crawling silently up over the wrinkled brown sand, and filling the tiny ruts, till diminutive hills and valleys are all one smooth surface? So it was with Margot. A tide flowed over her character, a waveless tide of reserve. The hills and valleys which I loved disappeared from my ken. Behind the old sweet smile, the old frank expression, my wife was shrinking down to hide herself, as one escaping from pursuit hides behind a barrier. When one human being knows another very intimately, and all the barricades that divide soul from soul have been broken down, it is difficult to set them up again without noise and dust, and the sound of thrust-in bolts, and the tap of the hammer that drives in the nails. It is difficult, but not impossible. Barricades can be raised noiselessly, soundless bolts—that keep out the soul—be pushed home. The black gauze veil that blots out the scene drops, and when it is raised—if ever—the scene is changed.

The real Margot was receding from me. I felt it with an impotence of despair that was benumbing. Yet I could not speak of it, for at first I could hardly tell if she knew of what was taking place. Indeed, at this moment, in thinking it over, I do not believe that for some time she had any definite cognisance of the fact that she was growing to love me less passionately than of old. In acts she was not changed. That was the strange part of the matter. Her kisses were warm, but I believed them premeditated. She clasped my hand in hers, but now there was more mechanism than magic in that act of tenderness. Impulse failed within her, and she had been all impulse. Did she know it? At that time I wondered. Believing that she did not know she was changing, I was at the greatest pains to guard my conduct, lest I should implant the suspicion that might hasten what I feared. I remained, desperately, the same as ever, and so of course was not the same, for a deed done defiantly bears little resemblance to a deed done naturally. I was always considering what I should say, how I should act, even how I should look. To live now was sedulous instead of easy. Effort took the place of simplicity. My wife and I were gazing furtively at each other through the eye-holes of masks. I knew it. Did she?

At that time I never ceased to wonder. Of one thing I was certain, however—that Margot began to devise excuses for being left alone. When we first came home

"I thought I caught her gaze fixed fearfully upon me"

she could hardly endure me out of her sight. Now she grew to appreciate solitude. This was a terrible danger-signal, and I could not fail to so regard it.

Yet something within me held me back from speaking out. I made no comment on the change that deepened day by day; but I watched my wife furtively, with a concentration of attention that sometimes left me physically exhausted. I felt, too, at length, that I was growing morbid, that suspicion coloured my mind and caused me, perhaps, to put a wrong interpretation on many of her actions, to exaggerate and misconstrue the most simple things she did. I began to believe her every look premeditated. Even if she kissed me I thought she did it with a purpose, if she smiled up at me as of old I fancied the smile to be only a concealment of its opposite. By degrees we became shy of each other. We were like uncongenial intimates, forced to occupy the same house, forced into a fearful knowledge of each other's personal habits, while we knew nothing of the thoughts that make up the true lives of individuals.

And then another incident occurred, a pendant to the incident of Margot's strange denied visit to the room she affected to fear. It was one night, one deep dark night of the autumn—a season to affect even a cheerful mind and incline it towards melancholy. Margot and I were now often silent when we were together. That evening, towards nine, a dull steady rain set in. I remember I heard it on the window-panes as we sat in the drawing-room after dinner, and remarked on it, saying to her that if it continued for two or three days she might chance to see the floods out, and that fishermen would descend upon us by the score.

I did not obtain much response from her. The dreariness of the weather seemed to affect her spirits. She took up a book presently, and appeared to read; but once, in glancing up suddenly from my newspaper, I thought I caught her gaze fixed fearfully upon me. It seemed to me that she was looking furtively

at me with an absolute terror. I was so much affected that I made some excuse for leaving the room, went down to my den, lit a cigar, and walked uneasily up and down, listening to the rain on the window. At ten Margot came in to tell me she was going to bed. I wished her good-night tenderly, but as I held her slim body a moment in my arms I felt that she began to tremble. I let her go, and she slipped from the room with the soft, cushioned step that was habitual with her. And, strangely enough, my thoughts recurred to the day, long ago, when I first held the great white cat on my knees, and felt its body shrink from my touch with a nameless horror. The uneasy movement of the woman recalled to me so strongly and so strangely the uneasy movement of the animal.

I lit a second cigar. It was near midnight when it was smoked out, and I turned down the lamp and went softly up to bed. I undressed in the room adjoining my wife's and then stole into hers. She was sleeping in the wide white bed rather uneasily, and as I leaned over her, shading the candle flame with my outspread hand, she muttered some broken words that I could not catch. I had never heard her talk in her dreams before. I lay down gently at her side and extinguished the candle.

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But sleep did not come to me. The dull, dead silence weighed upon instead of soothing me. My mind was painfully alive, in a ferment, and the contrast between my own excitement and the hushed peace of my environment was painful, was almost unbearable. I wished that a wind from the mountains were beating against the window-panes, and the rain lashing the house in fury. The black calm around was horrible, unnatural. The drizzling rain was now so small that I could not even hear its patter when I strained my ears. Margot had ceased to mutter, and lay perfectly still. How I longed to be able to read the soul hidden in her sleeping body, to unravel the mystery of the mind which I had once understood so perfectly! It is so horrible that we can never open the human envelope, take out the letter, and seize with our eyes upon its every word. Margot slept with all her secrets safe guarded, although she was unconscious, no longer watchful, on the alert. She was so silent, even her quiet breathing not reaching my ear, that I felt impelled to stretch out my hand beneath the coverlet and touch hers ever so softly. I did so.

Her hand was instantly and silently withdrawn. She was awake, then.

"Margot," I said, "did I disturb you?"

There was no answer.

The movement, followed by the silence, affected me very disagreeably.

I lit the candle and looked at her. She was lying on the extreme edge of the bed, with her blue eyes closed. Her lips were slightly parted. I could hear her steady breathing. Yet was she really sleeping?

I bent lower over her, and as I did so a slight, involuntary movement, akin to what we call a shudder, ran through her body. I recoiled from the bed. An impotent anger seized me. Could it be that my presence was becoming so hateful to my wife that even in sleep her body trembled when I drew near it? Or was this slumber feigned? I could not tell, but I felt it impossible at that moment to remain in the room. I returned to my own, dressed and descended the stairs to the door opening on to the terrace. I felt a longing to be out in the air. The atmosphere of the house was stifling.

Was it coming to this, then? Did I, a man, shrink with a fantastic cowardice from a woman I loved? The latent cruelty began to stir within me, the tyrant spirit which a strong love sometimes evokes. I had been Margot's slave almost. My affection had brought me to her feet, had kept me there. So long as she loved me I was content to be her captive, knowing she was mine. But a change in her

"The white thing was Margot."

attitude towards me might rouse the master In my nature there was a certain brutality, a savagery, which I had never wholly slain, although Margot had softened me wonderfully by her softness, had brought me to gentleness by her tenderness The boy of years ago had developed towards better things, but he was not dead in me. I felt that as I walked up and down the terrace through the night in a wild meditation If my love could not hold Margot, my strength should.

I drew in a long breath of the wet night air, and I opened my shoulders as if shaking off an oppression. My passion for Margot had not yet drawn me down to weakness It had raised me up to strength. The faint fear of her, which I had felt almost without knowing it more than once, died within me. The desire of the conqueror elevated me There was something for me to win My paralysis passed away, and I turned towards the house.

And now a strange thing happened. I walked into the dark hall, closed the outer door, shutting out the dull murmur of the night, and felt in my pocket for my matchbox. It was not there. I must inadvertently have laid it down in my dressing-room and left it. I searched about in the darkness on the hall table, but could find no light. There was nothing for it, then, but to feel my way upstairs as best I could.

I started, keeping my hand against the wall to guide me. I gained the top of the stairs, and began to traverse the landing, still with my hand upon the wall To reach my dressing-room I had to pass the apartment which had been my grandmother's sitting-room

When I reached it, instead of sliding along a closed door, as I had anticipated, my hand dropped into vacancy.

The door was wide open It had been shut, like all the other doors in the house, when I had descended the stairs—shut and locked, as it always was at night-time Why was it open now?

I paused in the darkness And then an impulse seized me to walk forward into the room. I advanced a step, but, as I did so, a horrible low cry broke upon my ears out of the darkness. It came from immediately in front of me, and sounded like an expression of the most abject fear

My feet rooted themselves to the ground.

"Who's there?" I asked

There came no answer.

I listened for a moment, but did not hear the minutest sound. The desire for light was overpowering. I generally did my writing in this room, and knew the exact whereabouts of everything in it I knew that on the writing-table there was a silver box containing wax matches. It lay on the left of my desk. I moved another step forward.

There was the sound of a slight rustle, as if some one shrank back as I advanced

I laid my hand quickly on the box, opened it and struck a light The room was vaguely illuminated. I saw something white at the far end, against the wall. I put the match to a candle

The white thing was Margot. She was in her dressing-gown, and was crouched up in an angle of the wall as far away from where I stood as possible Her blue eyes were wide open, and fixed upon me with an expression of such intense and hideous fear in them, that I almost cried out

"Margot, what is the matter?" I said "Are you ill?"

She made no reply Her face terrified me

"What is it, Margot?" I cried, in a loud, almost harsh voice, determined to rouse her from this horrible, unnatural silence. "What are you doing here?"

I moved towards her. I stretched out my hands and seized hers. As I did so a sort of sob burst from her. Her hands were cold and trembling.

"What is it? What has frightened you?" I reiterated.

At last she spoke in a low voice.

"You—you looked so strange, so—so cruel as you came in," she said.

"Strange! Cruel! But you could not see me. It was dark," I answered.

"Dark!" she said.

"Yes, until I lit the candle. And you cried out when I was only in the doorway. You could not see me there."

"Why not? What has that got to do with it?" she murmured, still trembling violently.

"You can see me in the dark?"

"Of course," she said. "I don't understand what you mean. Of course I can see you when you are there before my eyes."

"But——" I began; and then her obvious and complete surprise at my questions stopped them. I still held her hands in mine, and their extreme coldness roused me to the remembrance that she was unclothed.

"You will be ill if you stay here," I said. "Come back to your room."

She said nothing, and I led her back, waited while she got into bed, and then, placing the candle on the dressing-table, sat down in a chair by her side.

The strong determination to take prompt action, to come to an explanation, to end these dreary mysteries of mind and conduct, was still upon me.

I did not think of the strange hour; I did not care that the night was gliding on towards dawn. I was self-absorbed. I was beyond ordinary considerations.

Yet I did not speak immediately. I was trying to be quite calm, trying to think of the best line for me to take. So much might depend upon our mere words now. At length I said, laying my hand upon hers, which was outside the coverlet: "Margot, what were you doing in that room at such a strange hour? Why were you there?"

She hesitated obviously. Then she answered, not looking at me: "I missed you. I thought you might be there—writing."

"But you were in the dark."

"I thought you would have a light."

I knew by her manner that she was not telling me the truth, but I went on quietly: "If you expected me, why did you cry out when I came to the door?"

She tried to draw her hand away, but I held it fast, closing my fingers upon it with even cruel strength.

"Why did you cry out?"

"You—you looked so strange, so cruel."

"So cruel!"

"Yes. You frightened me—you frightened me horribly."

She began suddenly to sob, like one completely overstrained. I lifted her up in the bed, put my arms round her and made her lean against me. I was strangely moved.

"I frightened you! How can that be?" I said, trying to control a passion of mingled love and anger that filled my breast. "You know that I love you. You must know that. In all our short married life have I ever been even momentarily unkind to you? Let us be frank with one another. Our lives have changed lately. One of us has altered. You cannot say that it is I."

She only continued to sob bitterly in my arms. I held her closer.

"Let us be frank with one another," I went on. "For God's sake let us have

no barriers between us. Margot, look into my eyes and tell me—are you growing tired of me?"

She turned her head away, but I spoke more sternly: "You shall be truthful. I will have no more subterfuge. Look me in the face. You did love me once?"

"Yes, yes," she whispered, in a choked voice.

"What have I done, then, to alienate you? Have I ever hurt you, ever shown a lack of sympathy, ever neglected you?"

"Never—never.'

"Yet you have changed to me since—since——" I paused a moment, trying to recall when I had first noticed her altered demeanour.

She interrupted me.

"It has all come upon me in this house," she sobbed. "Oh! what is it? What does it all mean? If I could understand a little—only a little, it would not be so bad. But this nightmare, this thing that seems such a madness of the intellect——"

Her voice broke and ceased. Her tears burst forth afresh. Such mingled fear, passion, and a sort of strange latent irritation, I had never seen before.

"It is a madness indeed," I said, and a sense almost of outrage made my voice hard and cold. "I have not deserved such treatment at your hands."

"I will not yield to it," she said, with a sort of desperation, suddenly throwing her arms round me. "I will not—I will not!"

I was strangely puzzled. I was torn with conflicting feelings. Love and anger grappled at my heart. But I only held her, and did not speak until she grew obviously calmer. The paroxysm seemed passing away. Then I said, "I cannot understand."

"Nor I," she answered, with a directness that had been foreign to her of late, but that was part and parcel of her real, beautiful nature. "I cannot understand. I only know there is a change in me, or in you to me, and that I cannot help it, or that I have not been able to help it. Sometimes I feel—do not be angry, I will try to tell you—a physical fear of you, of your touch, of your clasp, a fear such as an animal might feel towards the master who had beaten it. I tremble then at your approach. When you are near me I feel cold, oh! so cold and—and anxious, perhaps I ought to say apprehensive. Oh, I am hurting you!"

I suppose I must have winced at her words, and she is quick to observe.

"Go on," I said; "do not spare me. Tell me everything. It is madness indeed; but we may kill it, when we both know it."

"Oh, if we could!" she cried, with a poignancy which was heartbreaking to hear. If we could!"

"Do you doubt our ability?" I said, trying to be patient and calm. "You are unreasoning, like all women. Be sensible for a moment. You do me a wrong in cherishing these feelings. I have the capacity for cruelty in me. I may have been—I have been cruel in the past, but never to you. You have no right to treat me as you have done lately. If you examine your feelings, and compare them with facts, you will see their absurdity."

"But," she interposed, with a woman's fatal quickness, "that will not do away with their reality."

"It must. Look into their faces until they fade like ghosts, seen only between light and darkness. They are founded upon nothing; they are bred without father or mother. They are hysterical. They are wicked. Think a little of me. You are not going to be conquered by a chimera, to allow a phantom created by your imagination to ruin the happiness that has been so beautiful. You will not do that! You dare not."

She only answered, "If I can help it"

A passionate anger seized me, a fury at my impotence against this child. I pushed her almost roughly from my arms.

"And I have married this woman!" I cried bitterly. I got up.

Margot had ceased crying now, and her face was very white and calm. It looked rigid in the faint candle-light that shone across the bed.

"Do not be angry," she said. "We are controlled by something inside of us. There are powers in us that we cannot fight against."

"There is nothing we cannot fight against," I said passionately. "The doctrine of predestination is the devil's own doctrine. It is the doctrine set up by the sinner to excuse his sin. It is the coward's doctrine. Understand me, Margot. I love you, but I am not a weak fool. There must be an end of this folly. Perhaps you are playing with me, acting like a girl, testing me. Let us have no more of it."

She said, "I only do what I must."

Her tone turned me cold. Her set face frightened me, and angered me, for there was a curious obstinacy in it. I left the room abruptly, and did not return. That night I had no sleep.

I am not a coward, but I find that I am inclined to fear that which fears me. I dread an animal that always avoids me silently more than an animal that actually attacks me. The thing that runs from me makes me shiver, the thing that creeps away when I come near wakes my uneasiness. At this time there rose up in me a strange feeling towards Margot. The white, fair child I had married was at moments—only at moments—horrible to me. I felt disposed to shun her. Something within cried out against her. Long ago, at the instant of our introduction, an unreasoning sensation that could only be called dread had laid hold upon me. That dread returned from the night of our explanation, returned deepened and added to. It prompted me to a suggestion which I had no sooner made than I regretted it. On the morning following I told Margot that in future we had better occupy separate rooms. She assented quietly, but I thought a furtive expression of relief stole for a moment into her face.

I was deeply angered with her and with myself; yet, now that I knew beyond question my wife's physical terror of me, I was half afraid of her. I felt as if I could not bring myself to lie long hours by her side in the darkness, by the side of a woman who was shrinking from me, who was watching me when I could not see her. The idea made my very flesh creep.

Yet I hated myself for this shrinking of the body, and sometimes hated her for rousing it. A hideous struggle was going on within me—a struggle between love and impotent anger and despair, between the lover and the master. For I am one of the old-fashioned men who think that a husband ought to be master of his wife as well as of his house.

How could I be master of a woman I secretly feared? My knowledge of myself spurred me through acute irritation almost to the verge of madness.

All calm was gone. I was alternately gentle to my wife and almost ferocious towards her, ready to fall at her feet and worship her or to seize her and treat her with physical violence. I only restrained myself by an effort.

My variations of manner did not seem to affect her. Indeed, it sometimes struck me that she feared me more when I was kind to her than when I was harsh.

And I knew, by a thousand furtive indications, that her horror of me was deepening day by day. I believe she could hardly bring herself to be in a room alone with me, especially after nightfall.

One evening, when we were dining, the butler, after placing dessert upon the table,

"Springing up, she glided softly out of the room"

moved to leave us. She turned white, and as he reached the door half rose, and called him back in a sharp voice.

"Symonds!" she said.

"Yes, ma'am"

"You are going?"

The fellow looked surprised. "Can I get you anything, ma'am?"

She glanced at me with an indescribable uneasiness. Then she leaned back in her chair with an effort, and pressed her lips together

"No," she said.

As the man went out and shut the door she looked at me again from under her eyelids; and finally her eyes travelled from me to a small, thin-bladed knife, used for cutting oranges, that lay near her plate, and fixed themselves on it. She put out her hand stealthily, drew it towards her, and kept her hand over it on the table. I took an orange from a dish in front of me

"Margot," I said, "will you pass me that fruit knife?"

She obviously hesitated.

"Give me that knife," I repeated roughly, stretching out my hand

She lifted her hand, left the knife upon the table, and at the same time, springing up, glided softly out of the room and closed the door behind her.

That evening I spent alone in the smoking-room, and, for the first time, she did not come to bid me good-night

I sat smoking my cigar in a tumult of furious despair and love. The situation was becoming intolerable It could not be endured I longed for a crisis, even for a violent one. I could have cried aloud that night for a veritable tragedy There were moments when I would almost have killed the child who mysteriously

eluded and defied me I could have wreaked a cruel vengeance upon the body for the sin of the mind. I was terribly, mortally distressed.

After a long and painful self-communion, I resolved to make another wild effort to set things right before it was too late, and when the clock chimed the half-hour after ten I went upstairs softly to her bedroom and turned the handle of the door, meaning to enter, to catch Margot in my arms, tell her how deep my love for her was, how she injured me by her base fears, and how she was driving me back from the gentleness she had given me to the cruelty, to the brutality, of my first nature

The door resisted me it was locked.

I paused a moment, and then tapped gently. I heard a sudden rustle within, as if some one hurried across the floor away from the door, and then Margot's voice cried sharply

"All the warmth in me froze up."

"Who's that? Who is there?"

"Margot, it is I I wish to speak to you—to say good night"

"Good-night," she said

"But let me in for a moment."

There was a silence—it seemed to me a long one; then she answered "Not now, dear· I—I am so tired."

"Open the door for a moment.'

"I am very tired Good-night."

The cold, level tone of her voice—for the anxiety had left it after that first sudden cry—roused me to a sudden fury of action I seized the handle of the door and pressed with all my strength Physically I am a very powerful man,—my anger and despair gave me a giant's might. I burst the lock and sprang into the room. My impulse was to seize Margot in my arms and crush her to death,

it might be, in an embrace she could not struggle against The blood coursed like molten fire through my veins. The lust of love, the lust of murder even, perhaps, was upon me I sprang impetuously into the room.

No candles were alight in it The blinds were up, and the cold moonbeams filtered through the small lattice panes By the farthest window, in the yellowish radiance, was huddled a white thing

A sudden cold took hold upon me All the warmth in me froze up

I stopped where I was and held my breath.

That white thing, seen thus uncertainly, had no semblance to humanity It was animal wholly. I could have believed for the moment that a white cat crouched from me there by the curtain, waiting to spring.

What a strange illusion that was! I tried to laugh at it afterwards, but at the moment horror stole through me, horror and almost awe

All desire of violence left me. Heat was dead: I felt cold as stone I could not even speak a word

Suddenly the white thing moved The curtain was drawn sharply; the moonlight was blotted out; the room was plunged in darkness—a darkness in which that thing could see!

I turned and stole out of the room I could have fled, driven by the nameless fear that was upon me.

Only when the morning dawned did the man in me awake, and I cursed myself for my cowardice.

* * * * * * *

The following evening we were asked to dine out with some neighbours, who lived a few miles off in a wonderful old Norman castle near the sea During the day neither of us had made the slightest allusion to the incidents of the previous night. We both felt it a relief to go into society, I think. The friends to whom we went—Lord and Lady Melchester—had a large party staying with them, and we were, I believe, the only outsiders who lived in the neighbourhood. One of their guests was Professor Black, whose name I have already mentioned—a little, dry, thin, acrid man, with thick black hair, innocent of the comb, and pursed, straight lips. I had met him two or three times in London, and as he had only just arrived at the castle and scarcely knew his fellow-visitors there, he brought his wine over to me when the ladies left the dining-room, and entered into conversation At the moment I was glad, but before we followed the women I would have given a year—I might say years—of my life not to have spoken to him, not to have heard him speak that night.

How did we drift into that fatal conversation? I hardly remember We talked first of the neighbourhood, then swayed away to books, then to people. Yes, that was how it came about The Professor was speaking of a man whom we both knew in town, a curiously effeminate man, whose every thought and feeling seemed that of a woman. I said I disliked him, and condemned him for his woman's demeanour, his woman's mind, but the Professor thereupon joined issue with me

"Pity the fellow if you like," he uttered, in his rather strident voice; "but as to condemning him I would as soon condemn a tadpole for not being a full-grown frog His soul is beyond his power to manage, or even to coerce, you may depend upon it."

Having sipped his port, he drew a little nearer to me, and slightly dropped his voice

"There would be less censure of individuals in this world," he said, "if people

"He drew a little nearer to me, and slightly dropped his voice"

were only a little more thoughtful. These souls are like letters, and sometimes they are sealed up in the wrong envelope. For instance, a man's soul may be put into a woman's body, or *vice versa*. It has been so in D——'s case. A mistake has been made.

"By Providence?" I interrupted, with, perhaps, just a *soupçon* of sarcasm in my voice.

The Professor smiled.

"Suppose we imitate Thomas Hardy and say by the President of the Immortals, who makes sport with more humans than Tess," he answered. "Mistakes may be deliberate, just as their reverse may be accidental. Even a mighty power may condescend sometimes to a very practical joke. To a thinker the world is full of apple-pie beds, and cold wet sponges fall on us from at least half the doors we push open. The soul juggleries of the before-mentioned President are very curious, but people will not realise that soul transference from body to body is as much a plain fact as the daily rising of the sun on one half of the world and its nightly setting on the other."

"Do you mean that souls pass on into the world again on the death of the particular body in which they have been for the moment confined?" I asked.

"Precisely. I have no doubt of it. Sometimes a woman's soul goes into a man's body; then the man acts woman, and people cry against him for effeminacy. The soul colours the body with actions, the body does not colour the soul, or not in the same degree."

"But we are not irresponsible. We can command ourselves."

The Professor smiled dryly.

"You think so?" he said. "I sometimes doubt it."

"And I doubt your theory of soul transference."

"That shows me—pardon the apparent impertinence—that you have never really examined the soul question with any close attention. Do you suppose that D—— really likes being so noticeably different from other men? Depend upon it, he has noticed in himself what we have noticed in him. Depend upon it, he has tried to be ordinary, and found it impossible. His soul manages him as a strong nature manages a weak one, and his soul is a female, not a male. For souls have sexes, otherwise what would be the sense of talking about wedded souls? I have no doubt whatever of the truth of re-incarnation on earth. Souls go on and on following out their object of development."

"You believe that every soul is re-incarnated?"

"A certain number of times."

"That even in the animal world the soul of one animal passes into the body of another?"

"Wait a minute. Now we are coming to something that tends to prove my theory true. Animals have souls, as you imply. Who can know them intimately and doubt it for an instant? Souls as immortal—or as mortal—as ours. And their souls, too, pass on."

"Into other animals?"

"Possibly. And eventually, in the process of development, into human beings."

I laughed, perhaps a little rudely. "My dear Professor, I thought that old notion was quite exploded in these modern scientific days."

"I found my beliefs upon my own minute observations," he said rather frigidly. "I notice certain animals masquerading—to some extent—as human beings, and I draw my own conclusions. If they happen to fit in at all with the conclusions of

Pythagoras—or any one else, for that matter—well and good. If not, I am not much concerned. Surely you notice the animal—and not merely the animal, but definite animals—reproduced in man. There are men whose whole demeanour suggests the monkey. I have met women who in manner, appearance, and even character, were intensely like cats."

I uttered a slight exclamation, which did not interrupt him.

"Now, I have made a minute study of cats. Of all animals they interest me the most. They have less apparent intensity, less uttered passion than dogs, but in my opinion more character. Their subtlety is extraordinary, their sensitiveness wonderful. Will you understand me when I say that all dogs are men, all cats women? That remark expresses the difference between them."

He paused a moment.

"Go on—go on," I said, leaning forward, with my eyes fixed upon his keen, puckered face.

He seemed pleased with my suddenly aroused interest.

"Cats are as subtle and as difficult to understand as the most complex woman, and almost as full of intuitions. If they have been well treated there is often a certain gracious, condescending suavity in their demeanour at first, even towards a total stranger, but if that stranger is ill disposed towards them they seem instinctively to read his soul, and they are in arms directly. Yet they dissemble their fears in a cold indifference and reserve. They do not take action, they merely abstain from action. They withdraw the soul that has peeped out, as they can withdraw their claws into the pads upon their feet. They do not show fight as a dog might, they do not become aggressive, nor do they whine and put their tails between their legs. They are simply on guard, watchful, mistrustful. Is not all this woman?"

"Possibly," I answered, with a painful effort to assume indifference.

"A woman intuitively knows who is her friend and who is her enemy—so long, at least, as her heart is not engaged: then she runs wild, I allow. A woman—— But I need not pursue the parallel. Besides, perhaps it is scarcely to the point, for my object is not to bolster up an absurd contention that all women have the souls of cats. No; but I have met women so strangely like cats that their souls have, as I said before souls do, coloured their bodies in actions. They have had the very look of cats in their faces. They have moved like them. Their demeanour has been patently and strongly feline. Now, I see nothing ridiculous in the assumption that such women's bodies may contain souls—in process of development, of course—that formerly were merely cat souls, but that are now gaining humanity gradually, are working their way upwards in the scale. After all, we are not so much above the animals, and in our lapses we often become merely animals. The soul retrogrades for the moment."

He paused again and looked at me. I was biting my lips, and my glass of wine was untouched. He took my agitation as a compliment, I suppose, for he smiled and said, "Are you in process of conversion?"

I half shook my head. Then I said, with an effort, "It is a curious and interesting idea, of course. But there is much to explain. Now, I should like to ask you this. Do you—do you believe that a soul, if it passes on as you think, carries its memory with it, its memory of former loves and—and hates? Say that a cat's soul goes to a woman's body, and that the cat has been—has been—well, tortured—possibly killed, by some one—say some man, long ago, would the woman, meeting that man, remember and shrink from him?"

"That is a very interesting and curious problem, and one which I do not pretend to have solved. I can, therefore, only suggest what might be, what seems to me

reasonable. I do not believe that the woman would remember positively, but I think she might have an intuition about the man. Our intuitions are, perhaps, sometimes only the fragmentary recollections of our souls of what formerly happened to them when in other bodies. Why, otherwise, should we sometimes conceive an ardent dislike of some stranger—charming to all appearance—of whom we know no evil, whom we have never heard of, nor met, before? Intuitions, so called, are often only tattered memories. And these intuitions might, I should fancy, be strengthened, given body, robustness, by associations—of place, for example. Cats become intensely attached to localities, to certain spots, a particular house or garden, a particular fireside, apart from the people who may be there. Possibly, if the man and the woman of whom you speak could be brought together in the very place where the torture and death occurred, the dislike of the woman might deepen into positive hatred. It would, however, be always unreasoning hatred, I think, and even quite unaccountable to herself. Still——"

But here Lord Melchester rose from the table. The conversations broke into fragments. I felt that I was pale to the lips.

We passed into the drawing-room. The ladies were grouped together at one end, near the piano. Margot was among them. She was, as usual, dressed in white, and round the bottom of her gown there was an edging of snow-white fur. As we came in she moved away from the piano to a sofa at some distance, and sank down upon it. Professor Black, who had entered the room at my side, seized my arm gently.

"Now, that lady," he whispered in my ear,—"I don't know who she may be, but she is intensely cat-like. I observed it before dinner. Did you notice the way she moved just then, the soft, yielding, easy manner in which she sat down, falling at once, quite naturally, into a charming pose? And her china-blue eyes are——"

"She is my wife, Professor," I interrupted harshly.

He looked decidedly taken aback.

"I beg your pardon; I had no idea. I did not enter the drawing-room to-night till after you arrived. I believed that lady was one of my fellow-guests in the house. Let me congratulate you. She is very beautiful."

And then he mingled rather hastily in the group near the piano.

The man is mad, I know, mad as a hatter on one point, like so many clever men. He sees the animal in every person he meets just because his preposterous theory inclines him to do so. Having given in his adherence to it, he sees facts not as they are, but as he wishes them to be; but he shall not carry me with him. The theory is his, not mine. It does not hold water for a moment. I can laugh at it now, but that night I confess it did seize me for the time being. I could scarcely talk; I found myself watching Margot with a terrible intentness, and I found myself agreeing with the Professor to an extent that made me marvel at my own previous blindness.

There was something strangely feline about the girl I had married—the soft, white girl who was becoming terrible to me, dear though she still was and must always be. Her movements had the subtle, instinctive and certain grace of a cat's. Her cushioned step, which had often struck me before, was like the step of a cat. And those china-blue eyes! A sudden cold seemed to pass over me as I understood why I had recognised them when I first met Margot. They were the eyes of the animal I had tortured, the animal I had killed. Yes, but that proved nothing, absolutely nothing. Many people had the eyes of animals—the soft eyes of dogs, the furtive, cruel eyes of tigers. I had known such people. I had even once had an affair with a girl who was always called the shot partridge, because her eyes were supposed to be like those of a dying bird. I tried to laugh to

"'Now, that lady . . . is intensely cat-like.'"

myself as I remembered this. But I felt cold, and my senses seemed benumbed as by a great horror. I sat like a stone, with my eyes fixed upon Margot, trying painfully to read into her all that the words of Professor Black had suggested to me—trying, but with the wish not to succeed.

I was roused by Lady Melchester, who came towards me asking me to do something, I forget now what. I forced myself to be cheerful, to join in the conversation, to seem at my ease, but I felt like one oppressed with nightmare,

and I could scarcely withdraw my eyes from the sofa where my wife was sitting. She was talking now to Professor Black, who had just been introduced to her; and I felt a sudden fury in my heart as I thought that he was perhaps drily, coldly, studying her, little knowing what issues—far reaching, it might be, in their consequences—hung upon the truth or falsehood of his strange theory. They were talking earnestly, and presently it occurred to me that he might be imbuing Margot with his pernicious doctrines, that he might be giving her a knowledge of her own soul which now she lacked. The idea was insupportable. I broke off abruptly the conversation in which I was taking part, and hurried over to them with an impulse which must have astonished any one who took note of me. I sat down on a chair, drew it forward almost violently, and thrust myself in between them.

"What are you two talking about?" I said roughly, with a suspicious glance at Margot.

The Professor looked at me in surprise.

"I was instructing your wife in some of the mysteries of salmon fishing," he said. "She tells me you have a salmon river running through your grounds."

I laughed uneasily.

"So you are a fisherman as well as a romantic theorist!" I said, rather rudely. "How I wish I were as versatile! Come, Margot, we must be going now. The carriage ought to be here."

She rose quietly and bade the Professor good-night; but as she glanced up at me, in rising, I fancied I caught a new expression in her eyes. A ray of determination, of set purpose, mingled with the gloomy fire of their despair.

As soon as we were in the carriage I spoke, with a strained effort at ease and the haphazard tone which should mask furtive cross-examination.

"Professor Black is an interesting man," I said.

"Do you think so?" she answered from her dark corner.

"Surely. His intellect is really alive. Yet, with all his scientific knowledge and his power of eliciting facts and elucidating them, he is but a featherheaded man."

I paused, but she made no answer.

"Do you not think so?"

"How can I tell?" she replied. "We only talked about fishing. He managed to make that topic a pleasant one."

Her tone was frank. I felt relieved.

"He is exceedingly clever," I said heartily, and we relapsed into silence.

When we reached home, and Margot had removed her cloak, she came up to me and laid her hand on my arm.

So unaccustomed was her touch now that I was startled. She was looking at me with a curious, steady smile, an unwavering smile that chilled instead of warming me.

"Ronald," she said, "there has been a breach between us. I have been the cause of it. I should like to—to heal it. Do you still love me as you did?"

I did not answer immediately. I could not. Her voice, schooled as it was, seemed somehow at issue with the words she uttered. There was a desperate, hard note in it that accorded with that enigmatic smile of the mouth.

It roused a cold suspicion within me that I was close to a masked battery. I shrank physically from the touch of her hand.

She waited with her eyes upon me. Our faces were lit tremblingly by the flames of the two candles we held.

At last I found a voice. "Can you doubt it?" I asked.

She drew a step nearer. "Then let us resume our old relations," she said.

"Our old relations?"

"Yes."

I shuddered as if a phantom stole by me. I was seized with horror.

"To-night? It is not possible!"

"Why?" she said, still with that steady smile of the mouth.

"Because—because I don't know—I—— To-morrow it shall be as of old, Margot——to-morrow. I promise you."

"Very well. Kiss me, dear."

I forced myself to touch her lips with mine.

Which mouth was the colder?

Then, with that soft, stealthy step of hers, she vanished towards her room. I heard the door close gently.

I listened. The key was not turned in the lock.

This sudden abandonment by Margot of the fantastic precautions I had almost become accustomed to filled me with a nameless dread.

That night I fastened my door for the first time.

IV.

FRIDAY NIGHT,
November 6th

I FASTENED my door, and when I went to bed lay awake for hours listening. A horror was upon me then which has not left me since for a moment, which may never leave me. I shivered with cold that night, the cold born of sheer physical terror. I knew that I was shut up in the house with a soul bent on unreasoning vengeance, the soul of the animal which I had killed prisoned in the body of the woman I had married. I was sick with fear then. I am sick with fear now.

To-night I am so tired. My eyes are heavy and my head aches. No wonder. I have not slept for three nights. I have not dared to sleep.

This strange revolution in my wife's conduct, this passionless change—for I felt instinctively that warm humanity had nothing to do with the transformation—took place three nights ago. These three last days Margot has been playing a part. With what object?

When I sat down to this grey record of two souls,—at once dreary and fantastic as it would seem, perhaps, to many,—I desired to reassure myself, to write myself into sweet reason, into peace.

I have tried to accomplish the impossible. I feel that the wildest theory may be the truest after all—that on the borderland of what seems madness, actuality paces.

Every remembrance of my mind confirms the truth first suggested to me by Professor Black.

I know Margot's object now.

The soul of the creature that I tortured, that I killed, has passed into the body of the woman whom I love; and that soul, which once slept in its new cage, is awake now, watching, plotting perhaps. Unconsciously to itself, it recognises me. It stares out upon me with eyes in which the dull terror deepens to hate; but it does not understand why it fears, why, in its fear, it hates. Intuition has taken the place of memory. The change of environment has killed recollection and has left instinct in its place.

Why did I ever sit down to write? The recalling of facts has set the seal upon my despair.

Instinct only woke in Margot when I brought her to the place the soul had known in the years when it looked out upon the world from the body of an animal.

That first day on the terrace instinct stirred in its sleep, opened its eyes, gazed forth upon me wonderingly, inquiringly.

Margot's faint remembrance of the terrace walk, of the flower-pots, of the grass borders where the cat had often stretched itself in the sun, her eagerness to see the chamber of death, her stealthy visits to that chamber, her growing uneasiness, deepening to acute apprehension, and finally to a deadly malignity—all lead me irresistibly to one conclusion.

The animal's soul within her no longer merely shrinks away in fear of me. It has grown sinister. It lies in ambush, full of a cold, a stealthy intention.

That curious, abrupt change in Margot's demeanour from avoidance to invitation marked the subtle, inward development of feeling, the silent passage from sensation only towards action.

Formerly she feared me. Now I must fear her.

The soul, crouching in its cage, shows its teeth. It is compassing my destruction.

The woman's body twitches with desire to avenge the death of the animal's.

I feel that it is only waiting the moment to spring; and the inherent love of life breeds in me a physical fear of it as of a subtle enemy. For even if the Soul is brave the body dreads to die, and seems at moments to possess a second Soul, purely physical, that cries out childishly against pain, against death.

Then, too, there is a cowardice of the imagination that can shake the strongest heart, and this resurrection from the dead, from the murdered, appals my imagination. That what I thought I had long since slain should have companioned me so closely when I knew it not!

I am sick with fear, physical and mental.

Two days ago, when I unlocked my bedroom door in the morning, and saw the autumn sunlight streaming in through the leaded panes of the hall windows, and heard the river dancing merrily down the gully among the trees that will soon be quite bare and naked, I said to myself, "You have been mad. Your mind has been filled with horrible dreams, that have transformed you into a coward and your wife into a demon. Put them away from you."

I looked across the gully. A clear, cold, thin light shone upon the distant mountains. The cloud stacks lay piled above the Seawfell range. The sky was a sheet of faded turquoise. I opened the window a moment. The air was dry and keen. How sweet it was to feel it on my face!

I went down to the breakfast-room. Margot was moving about it softly, awaiting me. In her white hands were letters. They dropped upon the table as she stole up to greet me. Her lips were set tightly together, but she lifted them to kiss me.

How close I came to my enemy as our mouths touched!

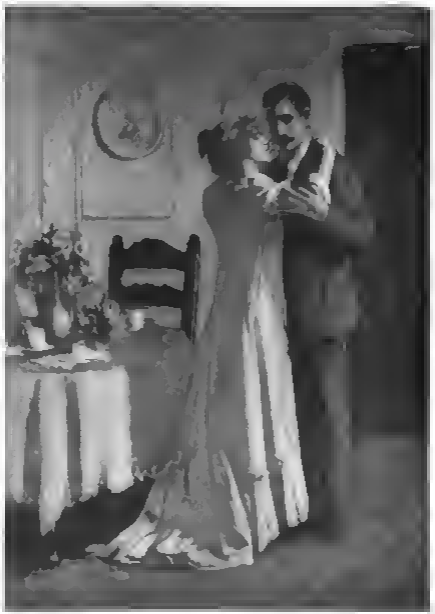
Her lips were colder than the wind.

Now that I was with her, my momentary sensation of acute relief deserted me. The horror that oppressed me returned.

I could not eat—I could only make a pretence of doing so; and my hand trembled so excessively that I could scarcely raise my cup from the table.

She noticed this, and gently asked me if I was ill.

I shook my head.



"How close I came to my enemy!"

When breakfast was over, she said in a low, level voice: "Ronald, have you thought over what I said last night?"

"Last night?" I answered, with an effort.

"Yes, about the coldness between us. I think I have been unwell, unhappy, out of sorts. You know that—that women are more subject to moods than men, moods they cannot always account for even to themselves. I have hurt you lately, I know. I am sorry. I want you to forgive me, to—to—"

She paused a moment, and I heard her draw in her breath sharply.

"—to take me back into your heart again."

Every word, as she said it, sounded to me like a sinister threat, and the last sentence made my blood literally go cold in my veins.

I met her eyes. She did not withdraw hers. They looked into mine. They were the blue eyes of the cat which I had held upon my knees years ago. I had gazed into them as a boy, and watched the horror and the fear dawn in them with a malignant triumph.

"I have nothing to forgive," I said, in a broken, husky voice.

"You have much," she answered firmly. "But do not—pray do not bear malice."

"There is no malice in my heart—now," I said, and the words seemed like a cowardly plea for mercy to the victim of the past.

She lifted one of her soft white hands to my breast.

"Then it shall all be as it was before? And to-night you will come back to me?"

I hesitated, looking down. But how could I refuse? What excuse could I make for denying the request? Then I repeated mechanically: "To-night I will come back to you."

A terrible, slight smile travelled over her face. She turned and left me.

I sat down immediately. I felt too unnerved to remain standing. I was giving way utterly to an imaginative horror that seemed to threaten my reason. In vain I tried to pull myself together. My body was in a cold sweat. All mastery of my nerves seemed gone.

I do not know how long I remained there, but I was aroused by the entrance of the butler. He glanced towards me in some obvious surprise, and this astonishment of a servant acted upon me almost like a scourge. I sprang up hastily.

"Tell the groom to saddle the mare," I said. "I am going for a ride immediately."

Air, action, were what I needed to drive this stupor away. I must get away from this house of tears. I must be alone. I must wrestle with myself, regain my courage, kill the coward in me.

I threw myself upon the mare, and rode out at a gallop towards the moors of Eskdale along the lonely country roads.

All day I rode, and all day I thought of that dark house, of that white creature awaiting my return, peering from the windows, perhaps, listening for my horse's hoofs on the gravel, keeping still the long vigil of vengeance.

My imagination sickened, fainted, as my wearied horse stumbled along the shadowy roads. My terror was too great now to be physical. It was a terror purely of the spirit, and indescribable.

To sleep with that white thing that waited me! To lie in the dark by it! To know that it was there, close to me!

If it killed me, what matter? It was to live and to be near it, with it, that appalled me.

The lights of the house gleamed out through the trees. I heard the sound of the river.

I got off my horse and walked furtively into the hall, looking round me.

Margot glided up to me immediately, and took my whip and hat from me with her soft, velvety white hands. I shivered at her touch.

At dinner her blue eyes watched me.

I could not eat, but I drank more wine than usual.

When I turned to go down to the smoking room, she said: "Don't be very long, Ronald."

I muttered I scarcely know what words in reply. It was close on midnight before I went to bed. When I entered her room, shielding the light of the candle with my hand, she was still awake.

Nestling against the pillows, she stretched herself curiously and smiled up at me.

"I thought you were never coming, dear," she said.

I knew that I was very pale, but she did not remark it. I got into bed, but left the candle still burning.

Presently she said: "Why don't you put the candle out?"

I looked at her furtively. Her face seemed to me carved in stone, it was so rigid, so expressionless. She lay away from me at the extreme edge of the bed, sideways, with her hands towards me.

"Why don't you?" she repeated, with her blue eyes on me.

"I don't feel sleepy," I answered slowly.

"You never will while there is a light in the room," she said.

"You wish me to put it out?"

"Yes. How odd you are to-night, Ronald! Is anything the matter?"

"No," I answered, and I blew the light out.

How ghastly the darkness was!

I believed she meant to smother me in my sleep. I knew it. I determined to keep awake.

It was horrible to think that, as we lay there, she could see me all the time as if it were daylight.

The night wore on. She was quite silent and motionless. I lay listening.

It must have been towards morning when I closed my eyes, not because I was sleepy, but because I was so tired of gazing at blackness.

Soon after I had done this there was a stealthy movement in the bed.

"Margot, are you awake?" I instantly cried out sharply.

The movement immediately ceased. There was no reply.

When the light of dawn stole in at the window she seemed to be sleeping.

* * * * * *

Last night I did not close my eyes once. She did not move.

She means to tire me out, and she has the strength to do it. To-night I feel so intensely heavy. Soon I must sleep, and then——

Shall I seek any longer to defend myself? Everything seems so inevitable, so beyond my power, like the working of an inexorable justice bent on visiting the sin of the father upon the child. For was not the cruel boy the father of the man?

And yet, is this tragedy inevitable? It cannot be. I will be a man. I will rise up and combat it. I will take Margot away from this house that her soul remembers, in which its body so long ago was tortured and slain, and she will—she must forget.

Instinct will sleep once more. It shall be so. I will have it so. I will strew poppies over her soul. I will take her far away from here, far away, to places where she will be once more as she has been.

To-morrow we will go. To-morrow——

* * * * * *

Ah! That cry! Was it my own? I am suffocating! What was that? The horror of it! The pen has fallen from my hand. I must have slept; and I have dreamed. In my dream she stole upon me, that white thing! Her velvety hands were on my throat. The soul stared out from her eyes, the soul of the cat! Even her body, her woman's body, seemed to change at the moment of vengeance. She slowly strangled me, and as the breath died from me, and my failing eyes gazed at her, she was no longer woman at all, but something lithe and white and soft. Fur enveloped my throat. Those hands were claws. That breath on my face was the breath of an animal. The body had come back to companion the soul in its vengeance, the body of——

Ah! it was too horrible!

Can vengeance for the dead bring with it resurrection of the dead?

* * * * * *

Hark! There is a voice calling to me from upstairs.

"Ronald, are you never coming? I am tired of waiting for you Ronald!"
"Yes"
"Come to me!"
"And I must go."

* * * * * *

Just at the glimmer of dawn the first pale shaft of the sun struck across a bed upon which lay the huddled and distorted corpse of a man His head was sunk down in the disturbed pillows. His eyes, that could not see, stared towards the rising light. And from the open window of the chamber of death, into the sun and the free air, there sprang, with the lithe grace of a joyous wild animal, something white and soft and silent A moment, and there was a gleam as of snowy fur in the sunshine. It flashed through the quivering air and was gone.

ROBERT S HICHENS.

"His head was sunk down in the disturbed pillows"

CLIFFORD'S ALLEGORY.

'TIS told of a day in the dawn of life,
When the waters covered the globe,
And the protozoa and sponge grew rife,
The Trilobite rose on the crest of strife,
Triumphant, with triple lobe.

The Trilobites sported in fancy free
On the beds of the Cambrian ooze,
For the world, as far as the eye could see,
Without taxation, or rent, or fee,
Was theirs just to pick and choose.

They used their minds to but little effect,
In a crude crustacean way,
And what was beyond the mud they fleck'd
Their entomostraceous intellect
Had no desire to essay.

Below them the igneous rocks lay warm,
Above was the ocean grey,
And the Trilobites said, "We can take no harm,
For there's nothing but us to cause any alarm
In the whole wide world"—said they

* * * *

Years rolled by on the path of time,
And the Trilobites knew no pang,
But still they wallowed among the slime,
And still they fancied themselves sublime,
When, all in a moment . . .
. . . . . Bang!

Away went confidence; down went pride;
Trouble and doubt came fast,
For a Trilobe arose who swept aside
Race, creed, tradition,—and dared to ride
Up, first, through the waters vast.

He saw the moon like a silver arc,
And the stars in a summer night,
And he hurried back with this sole remark:
"My brothers, the world is in general dark,
But sprinkled with spots of light."

"Fool!" "Impious!" "Heretic"—swift they cry,
Like the roar of an angry wave:
"There is no world but the one we spy"
. . . And they buried the liar beside his lie
In the protomartyr's grave.

* * * *

Centuries followed and passed away.
This story was blotted out;
But still there remained, in a kind of way,
A dream of a world that was black or grey,
With lights scattered all about.

Till there came a day in the course of time
When a Trilobe arose once more,
Who freed himself from the mud and slime,
And swam to the top, unaware of crime,
As the other had done before.

He saw the world at the noonday height,
And the sun like a fiery ball;
And he dived straight back to the realms of night,
Crying, "Brothers, the world is in general bright,
And a big light makes it all"

Then they slew him too, without grace or shrift,
For daring to preach dissent.
But the word remained, and was noised so swift
That it opened the way to a little rift,
Which widened into a rent.

For a faction flourished, and spread dismay
By the valour of faith and fist;
Some holding the world was as light as day,
Some dark with spots, like the Milky Way,
And some that it didn't exist.

* * * * *

Whether, and how, the dispute died out
This apologue stateth not.
It might have ended in battle-rout,
Or remained for ever a matter of doubt,
Or it might have been all forgot.

But a new age brought to the Trilobite
Development sure, if slow;
And there came a day when they all had sight,
And could swim to the surface by day or night,
And so—they found out, you know!

H. C. MARILLIER.